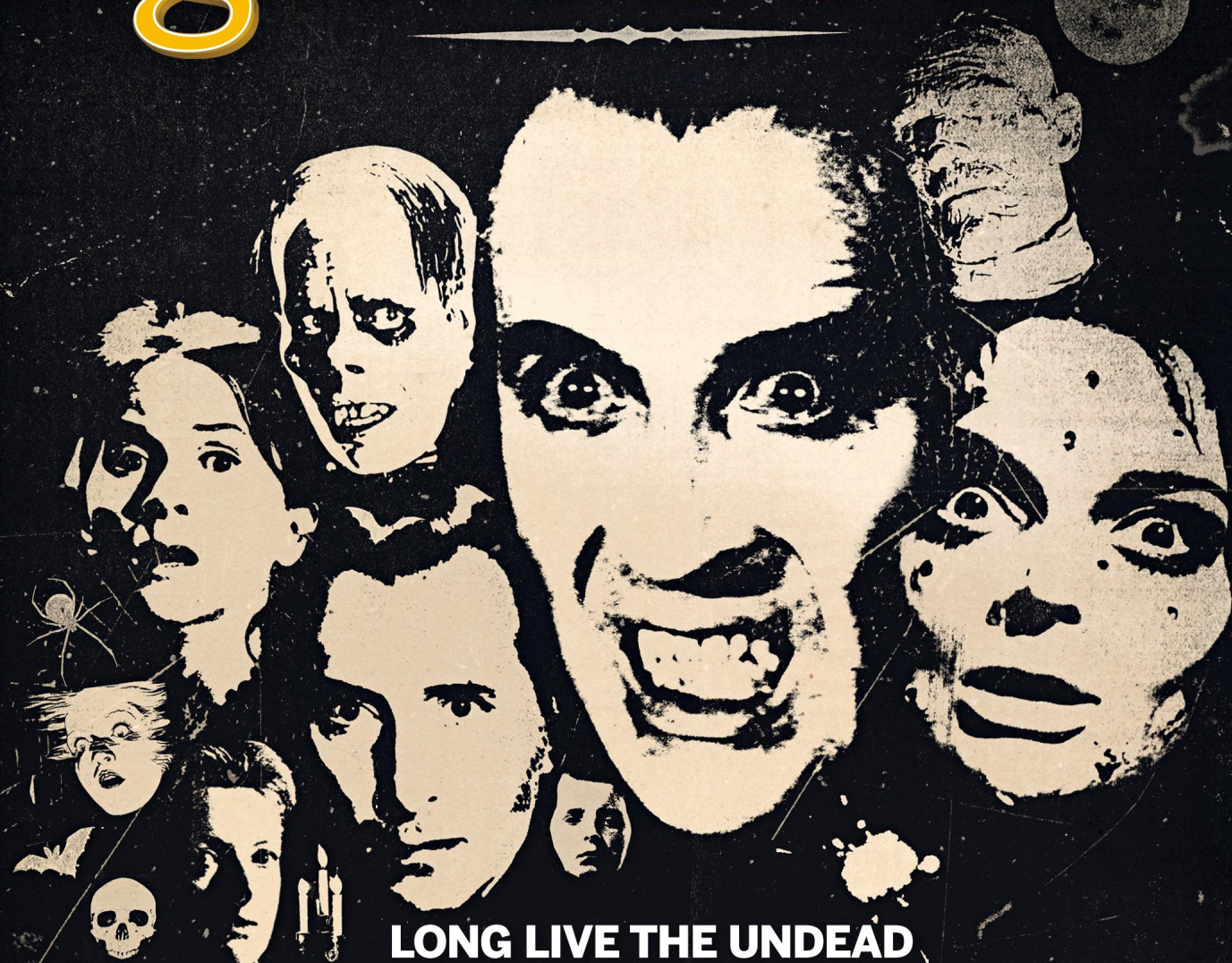


THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



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Look out for the LFF logo (above) for coverage of films screening at the festival, including *Captain Phillips*, *The Epic of Everest*, *Norte, the End of History*, *Philomena*, *The Selfish Giant* and more

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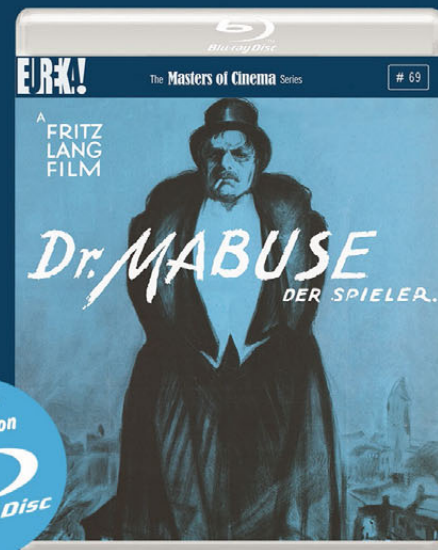
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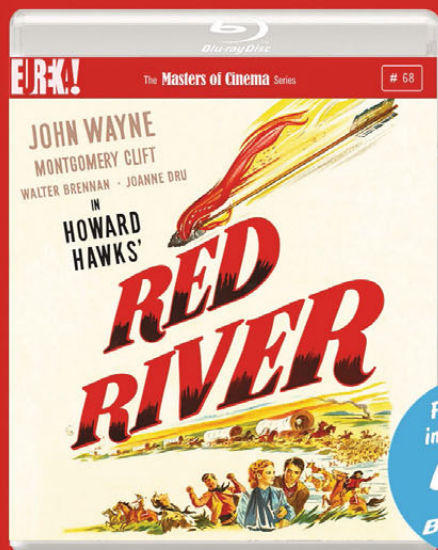
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Editorial enquiries

21 Stephen Street London W1T 1LN
t: 020 7255 1444
f: 020 7580 5830
w: bfi.org.uk/sightandsound
e: S&S@bfi.org.uk

Social media

f: facebook.com/SightSoundmag
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Subscriptions

t: 020 8955 7070
e: sightandsound@alliance-media.co.uk
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jason Anderson is a film critic and columnist at Toronto weekly *The Grid*

Daniel Barrow is a freelance writer and critic

Michael Brooke is a freelance writer and film historian

Tom Charity is programme coordinator at Vancity Theater, Vancouver

Ian Christie's latest book is *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception*

Philip Concannon is a freelance writer and blogs at *philonfilm.net*

Mark Cousins is a critic and filmmaker

Aaron Cutler works as a programming aide for the São Paulo International Film Festival

Sam Davies is a freelance writer on film and music

Rhidian Davis is cultural programme manager at the BFI and organiser of 'Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film'

Wade Davis's *Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest* is published by Vintage

Brian Dillon's *Objects in This Mirror: Essays* is published this autumn

Melissa Gronlund is the editor of *Afterall*

Owen Hatherley is the author of *Militant Modernism* and *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain*

Gabe Klinger is the director of *Double Play: James Benning and Richard Linklater*

Hannah McGill is a freelance writer and critic

Kate Muir is the chief film critic for *The Times*

Kim Newman's latest novel is *Professor Moriarty: The Hound of the d'Urbervilles*

Iain Sinclair's latest book is *Ghost Milk: Calling Time on the Grand Project*

Ben Walters is the producer of *BURN: Moving Images* by Cabaret Artists

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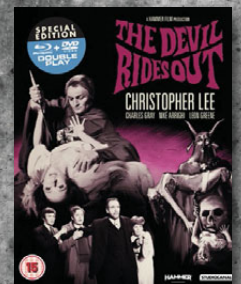
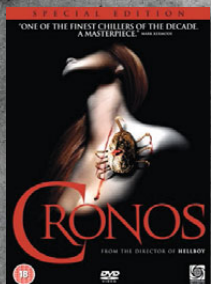
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Nick James

Deputy editor

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Features editor

James Bell

Web editor

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Sub-editors

Robert Hanks

Jane Lamacraft

Jamie McLeish

Ben Walters

Researcher

Mar Diestro-Dópido

Credits supervisor

Patrick Fahy

Credits associate

Kevin Lyons

Pieter Sonke

James Piers Taylor

Design and art direction

chrisbrowndesign.com

Origination

Altimage

Printer

Wyndham Group

BUSINESS

Publisher

Rob Winter

Publishing coordinator

Brenda Fernandes

Advertising consultant

Ronnie Hackston

Tel: 020 7957 8916

Mobile: 07799 605 212

Fax: 020 7436 2327

Email: ronnie.hackston@bfi.org.uk

Newsstand distribution

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Editorial Nick James



GOODBYE MR FRENCH

More than five years have passed since this column noted (see *S&S* June 2008) the escalating number of professional US film reviewers who had lost their jobs as a result of print publications 'rationalising' their staff in reaction to the influence of the internet. Subsequently we learned that film critics were merely the canaries in the coalmine as the whole profession of journalism underwent a crisis of confidence and many titles downsized or closed. The argument that – as far as print was concerned – publications should jump wholesale for an online market that promised only uncertain and insecure sources of revenue became dominant. And, of course, that same year, 2008, saw the worldwide financial collapse that dogs us all to this day.

UK film critics, however, seemed to be preserved. Being a small country and having national newspapers as the norm, rather than regional ones, gave the fourth estate a greater sense of solidity, however illusory. But the UK press could just about afford to let others elsewhere make mistakes first and learn from them.

In the last couple of years the frenzied debate about online being either a saviour or a catastrophe has ratcheted down. Some papers have made paywalls work, others believe huge reach will restore a position where patronage and advertising underwrite the cost of free reportage – even if it makes the writing more of a hostage to its own ratings (that is, how many people read the piece). And some talented new writers have made their name online and been picked up by more 'official' media. Before this summer, I'd have said a sort of equilibrium, however temporary, had been achieved.

But if you're one of the cadre of UK weekly newspaper critics, that's not how it looks right now. It's worth painting a small portrait here. For quite a long time the same august people were present at the press screenings for weekly critics. Peter Bradshaw (*Guardian*), Sukhdev Sandhu (*Telegraph*), Anthony Quinn (*Independent*), Nigel Andrews (*Financial Times*), James Christopher (*Times*), Christopher Tookey (*Daily Mail*), Philip French (*Observer*), Jenny McCartney (*Sunday Telegraph*), Jonathan Romney (*Independent on Sunday*), Cosmo Landesman (*Sunday Times*) and Derek Malcolm (*Evening Standard*), to name only the most prominent. In any profession you expect some change, and so Kate Muir replaced Christopher at the *Times* in 2010, and Robbie Collin was drafted in from the *News of the World* to replace Sandhu in 2012.

It seems many publishing outlets have forgotten that their brands were built on the quality of their writers, and that if you remove quality writers to trim budgets, your brand will suffer



This last summer, however, has seen a swathe cut through the ranks of chief film critics. The most symbolically important change has not been forced: the retirement of Philip French, a critic of such deep knowledge, rich understanding and wide enthusiasm that he stands alone. Yet his departure has coincided with some rude removals. The *Independent on Sunday* got rid of all its arts critics in one go, including Romney, and its weekday sister paper said goodbye to Quinn. Landesman was replaced by the columnist Camilla Long, Tookey announced his contract would not be renewed and the seemingly indestructible Malcolm was finally taken off what looks like his last reviewing gig.

This cull prompts me to a few conclusions, but before I relate them, let me say that I mean no disrespect in what follows to the new writers drafted in. First, it seems many publishing outlets around the world have forgotten that their brands were built on the quality of their writers, and that if you remove quality writers to trim budgets, your brand will suffer. Second, the *Independent* group's policy on arts coverage seems not to understand why people read newspapers (in hand or online) so I'm led to ask if it's a deliberate act of self-destruction or a reach down-market. There's also another way of looking at the reduction in UK film critics. Alexander Walker, the notorious *Evening Standard* critic who died a decade ago, used to say that in the 1960s and 70s you could fit the entire British film press corps into the back of a Mini. But from the 1990s onwards, media coverage of film boomed – perhaps we're just returning to the pre-boom status quo. Or, worst of all, you might think that if you can read anyone you want on any film for free, few critics will survive the global beauty contest.

But if critics have become less important it is partly because of the climate of fear the lack of jobs creates. Walker, for instance, was often outrageous and unforgettable in his views. Hardly anyone risks their reputation that way now. And at the same time the civilised, educated, deep-textured world French represents seems to be drifting off towards some distant horizon. We may not see its like in newspapers again. ☹

IN THE FRAME

KEEPING IT SURREAL



Through the looking glass: Jan Svankmajer

An exhibition exploring the versatile artistry of Jan Svankmajer reveals the full breadth of his sensual, often grotesque creations

By Michael Brooke

Anyone with even a passing interest in the work of the Czech surrealist genius Jan Svankmajer must know that it spans multiple media (live-action and animated film, prints, etchings, ceramics, collages, sculptures, found objects, puppetry, poetry, 'tactile objects'), and that it's just as much at home in an art gallery as in a cinema, if not considerably more. The galleries in question are usually located in his native Czech Republic (his non-film work was last seen in the UK in the 1990s), but the University of Brighton Gallery is currently hosting an ambitious exhibition, 'Jan Svankmajer: The Inner Life of Objects', accompanied by a film retrospective and other events.

Half the exhibition traverses the more familiar terrain of his films (comprising sets, decors, puppets, costumes, drawings and storyboards), while the other half is devoted to the various imaginary beings he has assembled over the years – notably via the *Historia Naturae* series of three-dimensional assemblages (1972-2012) and his madly ambitious, understandably abandoned print series, 'Svankmajer's Encyclopaedia' (1972-3), both spin-offs from his eight-part catalogue film *Historia Naturae, Suita* (1967). This, one of his wittiest concoctions, was dedicated to the Holy Roman emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612), a crucial formative influence on Svankmajer's creative philosophy. At his court in Prague, Rudolf kept a renowned 'cabinet of curiosities'; he was also a patron of the Italian painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo (c. 1527-93), who transformed piles of fruit, vegetables, animals, fish, books and other objects into uncannily convincing humanoid forms.

Although active four centuries apart, Arcimboldo and Svankmajer have both drunk deep from the same well-spring. But Svankmajer has taken the painter's ideas much further, both by animating his often grotesque creations (there are clear Arcimboldo homages in *Historia Naturae*, as well as 1965's *A Game with Stones* and, most

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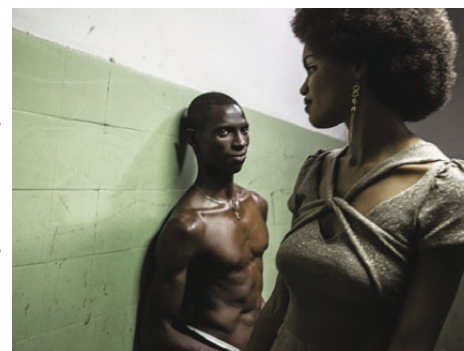
Leeds Film Festival

This year's event (6-21 November) boasts a pair of enticing retrospectives: one dedicated to Polish surrealist auteur Walerian Borowczyk, the other focusing on Japanese director Kobayashi Masaki, including his nine-hour WW2 epic 'The Human Condition' (right).



Film Africa

Highlights of this celebration of African cinema old and new, which takes place across six venues in London from 1-10 November, include a 40th anniversary screening of 'Touki-Bouki' and a focus on Chadian director Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, including his latest film 'Grisgris' (right).






A print from 'Svankmajer's Encyclopaedia' (left) and the tree-stump child from his film *Little Otik* (2000)

memorably, 1982's *Dimensions of Dialogue*) and by creating an ongoing conversation between the viewer and the ingredients – made particularly explicit in *Dimensions of Dialogue*, which deconstructs a number of Arcimboldo heads into their core materials before reassembling them, a repeated process that ultimately reduces them to the same grey sludge.

This dialogue becomes particularly involved whenever Svankmajer works with meat: by bringing it back to often unnervingly convincing 'life', he reminds us that these materials were once – indeed, very recently – part of a living, breathing creature whose flesh is still fresh and malleable. This is especially true of one of his signature devices, the reanimated tongue, an organ used to stimulate two senses (touch, taste), and which therefore can't help but trigger powerfully associative reactions. Svankmajer has long sought to offer sensual experiences beyond conventional visual and auditory ones, and while it's not possible to smell, taste or touch a film, he does his damndest to convey those sensations through extremely close shots of textures, surfaces and food, the latter often being masticated in close-up cutaways.

For hygiene reasons, meat and tongues make impractical sources for a gallery exhibit, but Svankmajer's bestiary is as likely to make use of bones, skulls, fur, feathers and antlers as of

more inanimate objects such as stones and shells. Those who have seen his debut feature *Alice* (1988) will have had a sneak preview of Svankmajer's gallery creations, in the shape of the sinister skeletal creatures that make a brief but unforgettable appearance in pursuit of the heroine. But even if his raw materials have never been supported by a circulatory and respiratory system, Svankmajer has long been fascinated by the notion that notionally 'dead' objects have an inner life, which he gently coaxes out of them by means of the increasingly formidable technical arsenal at his disposal. He's been doing this ever since he studied puppetry at Charles University in Prague in the mid-1950s – another recurring interest that links his art with far more ancient creative pursuits, and which is on especially vivid display in his second feature *Faust* (1994), in which human performers interact with puppets of various sizes, from minuscule to gigantic, without turning a hair, as though they were themselves wandering around their own private Svankmajer exhibition. 

i **'Jan Svankmajer: The Inner Life of Objects'** runs from 11 October to 2 December at the University of Brighton Gallery. It is accompanied by a complete film retrospective, selections of which will tour British cities in November and December

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE PRISONERS

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14%	<i>Se7en</i> (1995)
12%	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> (1991)
10%	<i>Taken</i> (2008)
8%	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> (2012)
8%	<i>The Offence</i> (1972)
5%	<i>Extremities</i> (1986)
3%	<i>High and Low</i> (1963)
2%	<i>The Searchers</i> (1956)
1%	<i>7 Days</i> (2010)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH JEAN-PIERRE MELVILLE

"Fifty years from now, I suspect that all films will have aged terribly... I estimate the final disappearance of cinemas as taking place around 2020... then there will be nothing but television"

From *Melville on Melville* by Rui Nogueira, 1971



Home Movie Day

This tribute to amateur cinema – "a chance for family memories to become show business," in the words of John Waters – takes place worldwide on 19 October. London's Cinema Museum will present Benjamin Britten's home movies (right) and allow members of the public to screen their films too.



Jazz on Film: French New Wave

This new five-CD box-set comprises seven of the key jazz film scores from French New Wave cinema of the late 1950s and early 60s. It features lesser-known soundtracks, such as Michel Legrand's compositions for Joseph Losey's 'Eva', as well as classics including Miles Davis's improvised score for 'Lift to the Scaffold' and jazz pianist Martial Solal's arrangements for 'Breathless' (right).



London International Animation Festival

The UK's largest animation festival returns for its tenth edition, presenting more than 300 films from 25 October to 3 November. Highlights include Kevin Schreck's 'Persistence of Vision', and a retrospective for Poland's 3D stereoscopic animation specialists, Platige Image film studio, featuring its forthcoming 'Another Day in the Life' (right).



HOPE FLOATS

Balloons are potent emblems of childhood innocence and joy – and of just how quickly they can vanish



By Hannah McGill

One feels inclined to blame the Victorians, with their somewhat punitive attitude to the lifestyle choice of being a child, for the existence of

a toy as nerve-racking, as pregnant with inevitable trauma, as the balloon. Technically, balloons go back a little further as objects for play – animal intestine versions date from medieval times or before. Rubber ones were invented by Michael Faraday in 1824 for use in his experiments with hydrogen, and repurposed by toy manufacturers soon thereafter; and it was over the Victorian era that they became popular emblems for childhood fun, their limited lifespan and necessary state of eminently breakable tension an imaginative fit for that era's somewhat unhealthy preoccupation with childhood innocence. What pleasure a balloon offers is inevitably limited. It's going to burst on you; before it bursts on you, it just might escape your hands and fly away. Any toy *might* break or be lost but with a balloon a sorrowful outcome is guaranteed. In the movies, therefore, balloons unsurprisingly tend to signify happy spontaneity and freedom from care, as in Albert Lamorisse's celebrated and much-referenced 1956 short *The Red Balloon*, in which a wayward balloon leads a small boy all over Paris; but by their vulnerability they also emphasise the ephemerality of such happy states. They often come in the gloved hands of that least trustworthy of faux-innocents, the clown. Few who saw the 1990 television adaptation of Stephen King's novel *It* at an impressionable age can quite shake off Pennywise the Dancing Clown, in whose offer of a balloon is concealed the threat of death.

With his line "They all float", Pennywise equates balloons with corpses. The same association is made, albeit more delicately, in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), with a balloon that drifts skyward when its child owner dies. Here the child-killer is no shapeshifting demon but an ostensibly ordinary man, Beckert, played by Peter Lorre. Beckert buys one of his victims, Elsie, a humanoid balloon with arms, legs and a face. When Elsie is killed, we see her toy trapped, flapping, in some power cables – an expression of the helplessness with which men and women find themselves manipulated in *M*. It's not just the abducted children and bereaved parents who are buffeted by exploitative interests. There's a chain of unseemly influence, from the reporters who are manipulated by the killer and his messages, to the police and criminal gangs growing ever more alike as they circle one another and the murderer, to the members of the public whipped into hysteria and mob violence by sensationalist press coverage. (A scene deleted after the film's premiere, and since lost, takes this theme further by depicting that odd phenomenon that



Pop culture: balloons often signify the fleeting nature of happiness, as in Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon*



An American Werewolf in London



Up

follows well-publicised crimes: a rash of false confessions.) Even the killer presents himself as one powerless in the grip of his compulsion, protesting that he “can’t help it”, that his need to kill is a curse rather than a choice. In the ersatz courtroom where Beckert is ‘tried’ by criminals, the balloon vendor produces another mannequin-balloon like the one he bought for Elsie; it bobs between us and Beckert, mirroring him, either mocking or sympathetically underlining his claims to hapless compulsion. The balloon’s painted-on face even lends it some resemblance to Lorre, given his rounded head, his plump cheeks and his wide, pretty eyes.

Lang’s misanthropy buoys *M*’s balloon. But it’s also via the compassion and determination of the old, blind balloon-seller, with his genuine concern for children, that the film’s murderer gets caught. Hope as well as risk can be found in playfulness. The very pointlessness of a balloon – the fact that it’s a toy that doesn’t really do anything, that doesn’t seek to educate or activate competitive or creative urges – makes it a potent symbol of fun for fun’s sake and the pursuit of airy fantasies. But it can have its practical uses too. Jafar Panahi’s 1995 debut film *The White Balloon* uses the titular item to emphasise not just childhood’s innocence but also its resourcefulness and resilience; the balloon vendor here is himself a child (and a displaced one at that, from Afghanistan) and the balloon ingeniously deployed in the retrieval of lost money. In Pixar’s beloved *Up* (2009), a retired balloon vendor uses his one-time stock-in-trade to fly his house to the Venezuelan jungle. Balloons prove useful once again in the memorably eccentric section of John Landis’s *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) in which nascent werewolf David (David Naughton) awakens naked in London zoo after a nocturnal binge that he cannot remember. Encountering a small boy with a bunch of balloons, David takes them to cover his modesty, and runs off; Landis stays on the small boy, who duly reports to his mother that “a naked American man stole my balloons”. Cropping up as they do just as the audience is processing the fact

What pleasure a balloon offers is inevitably limited. It’s going to burst on you; before it bursts on you, it might fly away

that its likeable hero and romantic lead is a monster and a killer, the balloons provide one of the picture’s many wrong-footing moments: slapstick planted bang in the midst of tragedy-laced horror. The sequence makes a Benny Hill farce out of David’s predicament but also emphasises its awfulness, amping up the strange and potent poignancy so peculiar to Landis’s film. Not many more silly jokes await this nice young American man; his innocence is long gone, and he’s going where “they all float”... And as is well known to balloon-phobics (globophobes) and small boys experimenting with static electricity, even the most insubstantial object can carry a certain charge. ☺

THE FIVE KEY...

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR FILMS

On the eve of the re-release of *Gone with the Wind*, we wade into battle with our pick of the major films about the conflict

By Michael Atkinson

From its inaugural appearance in Hollywood, in DW. Griffith’s infamously reactionary *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), the American Civil War became a battleground that would be refought on celluloid for decades hence – for every film that decries the butchery and bigotry, another pines for the bygone ‘moonlight and magnolias’ world of the slavery-loving South. America’s split personality has never been in sharper relief and you can’t fathom how the war lingers in the culture without considering both frames of mind, and the mainstream movies produced to please them.

i *Gone with the Wind* is re-released on 22 November. A Vivien Leigh season runs throughout November at BFI Southbank



2 *Gone with the Wind* (1939)
Love letters to plantation culture don’t come much more seductive, and it’s evidence of producer David O. Selznick’s fiery showmanship that this became arguably the most seen film of all time without much discussion of its politics. The war is largely off-screen, coming home in the form of corpses and carpetbaggers.



4 *Glory* (1989)
The tale of the Union’s first all-black infantry is told by director Ed Zwick with chest-swelling, rosy-cheeked sanctimony – at least until the finale, during the Battle of Fort Wagner, when everyone gets ground into hamburger. It’s a dismaying backslap of an ending that gives the lie to the Spielbergian agitprop that preceded it.



1 *The General* (1926)
A perfect, breathtaking classic of purely visual comedy, but pro-Confederacy? Buster Keaton, a Kansas-spawned vaudevillian born 30 years after the war ended, was no secessionist. Could even this most harmless of film culture chestnuts be viewed via ObamaWorld historic-cultural correctness? If not, why not?



3 *The Beguiled* (1971)
One of the American New Wave’s truest oddities, Don Siegel’s hothouse flower of a film has Clint Eastwood as a wounded Yankee soldier trapped in the web of lust and jealousy of a secluded Southern girls’ school. The war is ignored in favour of social breakdown, Southern gentility and timeless gothic darkness.



5 *Ride with the Devil* (1999)
Easily the most ambivalent saga ever made about the war, Ang Lee’s film is set in the war-fringe arena of Missouri and Kansas, where North/South, good/bad dichotomies were so muddled that it amounted to a free-kill zone. Tobey Maguire and Skeet Ulrich are the cutest homicidal Johnny Rebs ever.

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE

Zachary Heinzerling's Sundance documentary hit *Cutie and the Boxer* offers an affecting portrait of artistic rivalry and enduring love

By Sam Davies

Winner of the documentary directing prize at this year's Sundance festival, *Cutie and the Boxer* is director Zachary Heinzerling's debut feature. It paints a remarkable portrait of a 40-year marriage between 80-year-old Ushio Shinohara, a neo-Dadaist action painter who relocated to New York from Japan in 1969, and his wife Noriko, 21 years his junior. Ushio, a recovering alcoholic, is an extrovert who literally punches his paintings on to canvas. Heinzerling's film gently investigates the long-standing tensions in their relationship, caused by Ushio's selfishness, years of poverty, and anxiety over their son Alex, but in particular by the increasing recognition Noriko starts to receive for her own artwork – impressionistic comic books that draw heavily on her life with Ushio as characters named Cutie and Bully, which Heinzerling features in short animated sequences.

Sam Davies: How did *Cutie and the Boxer* come about?

Zachary Heinzerling: I met Ushio and Noriko through a friend. We went to an open studio day and he introduced me to them and a few afternoons later I shot a day-in-the-life. Ushio in particular really loves to be filmed and loves being watched. Noriko was sort of eager for her side of the story to be told. At first we were filming how we were introduced to them, which was primarily through Ushio's artwork. But quickly I realised that I wanted to figure each of them out through each other and the relationship, rather than only their artwork. So it really became a friendship, starting five years ago with the first day I shot. I would periodically come over and have dinner and sometimes film, and slowly get a sense of what the film should be.

SD: And that sense changed over time?

ZH: Yeah, like most of these longitudinal, *vérité* portraits. What you see in the movie is probably only scenes from the last two years of shooting, when I had a much better sense of what the film was, Noriko's character had really shown itself and she was presenting her work in a new way. As I became more and more [a part of] the fabric of their household, less of an investigator and more of an observer, the things that I was after organically came up. I was always interested in why these two were still together. Noriko was always complaining from day one about how terrible her husband Ushio is, so why stick with him? What's made the relationship last? Those aren't necessarily questions you can ask and get serious answers from them.

SD: You get the sense that your presence is enabling something though, a change in their relationship even?

ZH: Definitely. Noriko talks about this too, I was sort of the first outsider to be really interested in her Cutie comics. It certainly encouraged her to continue and finish the comic book. And Ushio became jealous that Noriko was getting more screen time, which



The odd couple: Noriko and Ushio Shinohara

I think only encouraged her to encourage me to continue telling her side of the story.

SD: It seems like you had two challenges: an extrovert performer and a shy introvert?

ZH: Probably the only point in the film where Ushio's not actually performing is the archival footage where he's drunk. It's how he is, it's how he is with Noriko. Noriko will tell you that you will never reach the core with him, it's always a show. Seeing that archival scene where he's talking about the artist's life and how painful and how brilliant it is at the same time, I do think it's the most genuine moment of his in the movie. With Noriko, I think she's sort of acting in other ways; her reaction is always to bicker, to complain and to identify herself as, in some ways, the victim, so the effort there was to find the moments where you did sense that she appreciated him or was inspired by him – like her running to the door when he returns from Japan. She has her own faults, certainly with her son. She says in the movie she really regrets the way he was brought up and she was somewhat complicit in that as well. I tried to show both characters are complicated, and not necessarily side with one or the other.

Ushio and Noriko are inspiring. They're the last of a dying breed and represent some kind of romantic idea of the artist



Zachary Heinzerling

SD: One striking feature of the film is the sequences where you animated Noriko's comic, *Cutie and Bully*.

ZH: I wanted the film to really have a sense of the imaginative and whimsical quality of their life. The animation took on a multilayered purpose – of being her expression but also exposition that depicts scenes from the past. That happy-sad feeling of those comics was a really interesting tone that I wanted to mimic – and enhance, almost. We were fortunate to get grants for the animation and to involve Noriko in the process a bit, so she was sort of onboard from the beginning.

SD: As a cinematographer who's worked for other directors, what visual decisions did you find yourself making for your own film?

ZH: Early on, part of it is just their space. They live in this decaying studio, it's one of the last of these artists' walk-up lofts in Dumbo [District under the Manhattan Bridge overpass]. All the clothes they wear, they seem to have been wearing for 30 years. They have all these faded pastels, there's a softness and warmth to their cluttered environment. I was playing into those pastels, desaturating a little bit. I used these older lenses that have a softer feel to them. One hard thing to do is get the level of intimacy and close-ups that you do in a narrative film, so the effort was to keep getting closer and closer and closer, have everything framed tightly and be trying to get those reaction shots. So much of the film is in those reactions.

SD: Did you find it inspiring being around two people who've persevered for so long, artistically and emotionally?

ZH: It's probably complicated but yeah, being around two people who are constantly in progress allows you to feel like being in progress is OK. They are inspiring. They're kind of the last of a dying breed and represent some kind of romantic idea of the artist. If you go to their house it is like a time-war. Everyone who goes there is so overwhelmed with the presence and the beauty and the purity of their lifestyle. ☺

LFF *Cutie and the Boxer* is screening at the London Film Festival. It is released on 1 November and is reviewed on page 73

The London Korean Film Festival 2013



THE LONDON KOREAN FILM FESTIVAL 7-22 NOVEMBER

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COLORADO DREAMING

Fast and slow, sad and happy, always widescreen: after 40 years, Telluride still delivers an electrifying jolt all of its own



By Mark Cousins

I've written about the Telluride film festival before. I've tried to describe its impact on film history. I've said that it's

a tastemaker and mythmaker and that, in having little media presence and less industry activity, it has countered the decrease in enchantment of the film festival world.

To write about something a second time is to try to go deeper. This year was Telluride's fortieth, and my fourth time there, so I want to look closely at it and think closely about it. The painter Paul Cézanne was a master of looking and thinking at the same time. Imagine what he would have made of Telluride's box canyon, its distant waterfalls, its cloudscapes.

The first thing that strikes me this year is Telluride's tonal contrasts. If New York is an espresso hit, and Los Angeles is all languor and eucalyptus, Telluride is both. The buzz of dashing between movies there, as elsewhere, is like a Vertov film, an adrenaline rush, yet, each morning, along its little river, as the sun comes up, I walk through threads spun by spiders overnight, which have been silvered with dew. Telluride is both fast and slow.

But show a film there and such paradoxes double. I was delighted to have two films selected this year. *A Story of Children and Film* plays to full houses, but *Here Be Dragons*, an account of a trip to Albania, has just 14 people at its world premiere. I'm gutted. But then the lights go up and people cheer and word of mouth spreads and, at the second screening, a woman says: "I am Albanian. I cannot speak at the moment. I did not expect to see my heart on screen." I go from sadness to euphoria. The amplitude of the emotions in Telluride is like the amplitude of the canyon in which it lies. It is a metaphor for itself.

Fast-slow and with alpine emotions: a decent way of describing this festival, but something's missing. Something's on the tip of my tongue. It remains so until I go to a screening of William Dieterle's *Portrait of Jennie* (1948), introduced by the critic David Thomson, in the theatre where Sarah Bernhardt acted and Abel Gance spoke. Thomson brilliantly argues that *Portrait of Jennie* is a premonition of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) – it has an obsession with a perhaps-dead woman, a tower, nuns and a mystical green light. As I watch Jennie, I see Madeleine but, also, I realise that I'm seeing something else. What? It's on the tip of my tongue. Then it dawns on me. I'm seeing Telluride. The film is famously full of process shots, back-projections of numinous landscapes and cloudscapes in the gloaming. As I watch, I realise that Telluride's steep mountain backdrop is like a cyclorama, cinerama, something from the



Vertigo déjà vu: Joseph Cotten and Jennifer Jones in *Portrait of Jennie*

brush of Cedric Gibbons – who art directed *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Brigadoon* (1954) – or Alexandre Trauner, who designed 1945's *Les Enfants du paradis*, and who visited Telluride.

Other realisations follow. In the film, each time Joseph Cotten meets Jennie, played by Jennifer Jones, she has grown much older. He stands still, watching her time, her history, speed up. This is what happens to movie history in Telluride. It comes at you unfeasibly fast, like Jennie, like thunderbolts. Just as thunderstorms scatter Cedric Gibbons-y rainbows across the canyon this year, film history keeps bursting into life. Dean Tavoularis, who designed *The Godfather* (1972) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and art directed *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), chats on a hotel stair; at a buffet dinner Francis Coppola shares a table with the Coens; Salman Rushdie introduces Satyajit Ray's *The Big City* (1963) in the Chuck Jones theatre; you hear Werner Herzog before you see him; Bruce Dern walks around as if on stilts; B. Ruby Rich revives Sara Gómez's *One Way or Another* (1977); Michael Ondaatje screens Alan Clarke's *Elephant* (2003); Buck Henry shows us Mike Hodges's Kubrickian *The Terminal Man* (1974), in which George Segal has computer implants in his brain. These are thunderbolts because they electrify the streets, the cinemas. Telluride has so many guests (Leni Riefenstahl and Gloria Swanson together in its first year) that

This is what happens to movie history in Telluride. It comes at you unfeasibly fast, like thunderbolts

time bends, as it does in *Portrait of Jennie*.

Fast-slow, alpine emotions and time bends: that's Telluride, I think to myself, but then, towards the end of *Portrait of Jennie*, something astonishing happens. Thomson had mentioned that the film would go from black and white to the kind of green haze through which Kim Novak walks in the revelatory moment in *Vertigo*, and so it does. But at the same time, the screen side tabs shoot open, and a 1948 4x3 film suddenly is playing in a much wider frame. It is recomposed, modernised. It seems to jump in time. This takes my breath away.

I'm reminded of the breathlessness of Telluride itself – it's nearly three kilometres above sea-level. You have to suck in air, like a heavy smoker, when you get up out of bed or stand up suddenly. Excitement and altitude have a similar effect. I remember the breathlessness I felt a few days ago in Telluride at the *Orphée*-like sex scenes in Jonathan Glazer's new masterpiece, *Under the Skin*. We had to ride up and over a mountain in a cable-car to see it and then, afterwards, down the mountain again in total darkness: that American, Lynchian darkness. I recall the breathlessness I felt at seeing, for the first time, way back in 1986, Dean Stockwell lip-sync to Roy Orbison's 'In Dreams' in *Blue Velvet* (which premiered in Telluride). I imagine Andrei Tarkovsky being breathless here.

The shock of the sudden widescreen is what I had been looking for: a jolting image to jolt images, to electrify thought, to symbolise Telluride's widescreen, its fast-slow, sad-happy, breathless movie dreamscapes. These elements shadow forth Telluride's regular avoidance of the prosaic. ☺

DEVELOPMENT TALE

DAISY PULLS IT OFF



Five have a nuclear war: Harley Bird, Tom Holland, Saoirse Ronan and George Mackay in *How I Live Now*

The producers of *How I Live Now* had to wait years for the right director to be free – and the right actor to grow up

By Charles Gant

It might feel that it was written in the stars that Kevin Macdonald would direct *How I Live Now*. After all, the film is a collaboration between Cowboy Films, one of the producers of his first fiction film *The Last King of Scotland*, and Passion Pictures, which shepherded his debut feature documentary *One Day in September*. In fact, the teen drama had already been six years in development before the versatile filmmaker climbed aboard.

Cowboy's Charles Steel read Meg Rosoff's young adult novel when it was circulating, in 2003, a year ahead of publication. He immediately saw the film potential of the story of 15-year-old New Yorker Daisy, who experiences first love in an English rural idyll that then becomes caught up in a global conflict. But with rivals already placing bids for film rights, Cowboy needed to act quickly, teaming up with friend and fellow producer Alasdair Flind as well as Passion's John Battsek and Andrew Ruhemann. They clinched the deal after meeting the author. Says Steel, "It

was the care and love and passion we had for the book that I'd like to think won her over."

Rather than beginning with a script, the four producers felt that first they needed to engage the right director; Thomas Vinterberg responded with enthusiasm. Talk turned to writers: Tony Grisoni, at the time winning acclaim with Michael Winterbottom for *In This World*, emerged as an ideal candidate. The UK Film Council and Film4 came on to finance script development, and Grisoni's drafts followed. Flind (who has now joined Cowboy) says, "Tony was brilliant on the poetry and the structure was very much sorted out."

Steel picks up the story. "We got to a point, it was felt that it might benefit from another writer having an input, so Jeremy Brock joined the fray, and he brought a lot, including a more developed sense of the war and the enemy. I think we got to a place where we had a pretty good screenplay, and we had a budget, and started to think about casting and go out into the market and try to finance. That probably took us four years, and we came very close."

At that time, before the financial crash, the boutique divisions of US studios – Paramount Vantage, Warner Independent, Picturehouse – were active in pre-buying high-end British films, and this seemed the most likely funding model. The deal nearly came together at Cannes 2007, but

it was not to be. "Afterwards, we sat with Thomas," says Steel. "The budget was around what it was when we ended up making the film, £4-5 million. Was there a way to do it on a much cheaper level? But we felt that the nature of working with kids and the qualities you need in terms of the war even as a backdrop, but also trying to capture England in its glory in terms of nature, it just felt it wasn't a much lower-budget improvised piece. Things started to unwind. Thomas decided to take a step back; he had another film going. It wasn't a lot of tears but it didn't quite come together."

The script remained hot: US agents threw a lot of names at them – "Endless calls about directors who wanted to do it who just didn't feel right for us," says Steel. For a while, Susanne Bier was in the mix, and they met with her a couple of times. But she had a Working Title film on flashing amber, so couldn't quite commit at that stage.

Adds Steel, "In retrospect what we didn't ever do is compromise on what we thought the film should be, where we wanted to head. There may have been opportunities to get the film made, but it just didn't feel right. We felt it was better to wait and sit and hold out." Rosoff kept the faith, agreeing to option renewals along the way.

Then, suddenly, the missing piece of the puzzle fell into place. Macdonald, a father of three, had read the book when it came out, felt a connection to it, and had always been on the

producers' wish list. But he always had a full dance card. Macdonald was in Hungary scouting locations for *The Eagle* when he called Steel. "He literally said, 'I tell you what. I've always wanted to do this film. If you wait for me, I will commit to do it as my next film.' It was a no-brainer."

Throughout the development of the script, the producers, directors and writers faced big questions: who is the audience? Is this a movie for teenagers, or an adult film where the principal characters happen to be in their mid-teens? Also: who are the enemy – never named in Rosoff's novel – and how realistically should the war be depicted? "Initially we tried to have our cake and eat it, and make a film that could appeal to both," Flind explains, "and finessing that balance was a continuous conversation. And also the balance between, on the one hand, reality and the war and the enemy, and on the other, the tone of magical realism and poetry and beauty."


Flind adds, "Kevin decided this needed to be a teenage film that would bring an adult audience with it, and we really needed to be bold and honest about that, and map it out in that way. It was hugely beneficial to the whole process. It suddenly moved it forward, and it became clear what it was, and who it was made for."


Macdonald had a healthy relationship with Brock from *The Last King of Scotland*, and the writer reshaped the script more in line with the director's vision. But, says Steel, "We weren't quite

'Kevin Macdonald said, "If you wait for me, I will commit to do it as my next film." It was a no-brainer'

there." Jack Thorne (*Skins*) took a pass at it, but he is not one of the credited screenwriters. And then playwright Penny Skinner (*The Village Bike*) took the screenplay across the finish line, paying particular attention to how the voice of Daisy – who narrates the novel – could ring true without recourse to voiceover. Casting would be key.

In 2007, when the Vinterberg package was starting to unravel, Saoirse Ronan burst on to the scene with *Atonement*. The petite 13-year-old was too young to play Daisy, but prompted the thought, Flind says: "God, wouldn't it be amazing to discover someone like Saoirse." Macdonald's original idea was to use non-professional actors in the child roles, and casting directors on both sides of the Atlantic were tasked with those discoveries. When he changed his mind, Ronan, by then aged 18, proved a perfect fit.

Says Flind, "On the surface, Daisy is very angry, full of attitude and quite easy not to like. In the novel you can go behind that attitude and investigate what she's really like. It's much harder to do that with a screenplay. I think one of the things that Saoirse and Kevin did brilliantly was you really get that attitude and that front and anger, but with Saoirse you also get all the vulnerability and the heart and the depth that's so key to the film. You understand that what she delivers to the world isn't what she's really like." 

 **How I Live Now** is out now in cinemas and was reviewed in last month's issue

THE NUMBERS THE GREAT BEAUTY



Roman triumph: Tony Servillo as Jep Gambardella in *The Great Beauty*

By Charles Gant

Back in August, when Artificial Eye was putting the finishing touches to its release campaign for the new Paolo Sorrentino film, responsible caution trumped wild optimism. Explains distribution boss Ben Luxford, "It's been a brutal summer for everyone. There were no guarantees that *The Great Beauty* was going to realise its potential in the marketplace. I didn't want to run away with this. The approach was to aim for a fairly high but realistic arthouse return."


As part of a company that also owns hit-hungry arthouse cinemas – the Curzon chain – Artificial Eye had an extra incentive to offer a film capable of kickstarting the autumn season. Says Luxford, "We know that this first weekend of September is a great opportunity to try and capture that ABC1 audience who may have been away for the summer, or are starting to look for ways to fill their weekends beyond the garden. There always has to be one film that comes along and gets things going again. We felt, why shouldn't it be *The Great Beauty*, and quite rightly it was."

By choosing an early September release date, Artificial Eye knew they were forgoing a London Film Festival slot, but felt that titles such as *The Selfish Giant* and *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* had more to gain from an LFF berth. Says Luxford, "What were going to be the great benefits of waiting for London and then being in that log-jam of titles that

come straight out of the festival? We had a clear date and a clear opportunity of an audience."

With limited marketing spend, and a summer of arthouse flops (*Before Midnight*, *The Bling Ring*) that didn't exactly give *The Great Beauty* a strong theatrical platform for its trailer, resources were focused on key media placements in the week before release. "It was an all-out late ambush rather than a slow-burn approach," says Luxford.

Despite a running time that made it tricky for cinemas to deliver two evening showtimes – the Curzon Soho managed it by alternating it with shorter features across all three screens – the film debuted with a very impressive £117,000 from 25 screens, delivering a weighty average of £4,682. The success triggered a £40,000 'Sleeper' award from the British Film Institute to assist with a sustained expansion, and after 17 days the box office had risen to £479,013.

The distribution campaign was, Luxford agrees, "really very old school", and particularly in its focus on validation from high-end critics. The *Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw in particular has been mentioned by cinema managers as a name heard on customers' lips, and his encouragement to stay until the screen goes black has had a clear impact – a timely rebuke to so much 'death of the critic' hyperbole. "No one is leaving the cinema until the credits have finished on this film," says Luxford. "Everyone is sitting and being part of Paolo's journey right up to the very end. It's really special to see." 

PAOLO SORRENTINO AT UK BOX OFFICE

Film	Year	Gross
The Great Beauty	2013	£479,013*
The Consequences of Love	2005	£450,851
Il Divo	2009	£356,558
This Must Be the Place	2012	£162,327
The Family Friend	2007	£130,622

*Box-office at September 23

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

A sustainable UK film industry requires us to support voices of note rather than simply strive to make British cinema more mainstream



By Ben Roberts

Much has been made of the recent triumph of British films at Venice and Toronto. For range and quality, it was said, the Brits could not be

beaten. As head of the Film Fund, my flesh was pressed many times on Toronto's King Street West by friends and former colleagues offering variations on "Quite a year for the Brits!", which I mostly took to mean "You must be f*****g relieved!" When Steve McQueen bagged the audience award, and Stephen Frears took the runner-up prize, it was game over: the British were not only coming, they had come all over the place.

This is a marked difference from a few months back, when the popular press were depressed about the state of the UK film industry and wondering what had gone wrong. The *Independent* and *Observer* ran comment pieces blaming the whole mess on a legacy of safe, all-eyes-on-America decision-making by "careless bureaucrats" (the words still sting) that had failed to deliver a new generation of world-class filmmakers. All we could do was click our heels together and repeat, "There's no place like the TIFF Bell Lightbox..."

A recent *Observer* story examined the new wave of UK filmmakers and asked a number of Toronto's conquering heroes just what had gone right. The consensus suggested that – for the moment at least – we were witnessing an upswing in confidence among filmmakers who felt comfortable in their own skin because they had been awarded the freedom to play to their distinctive strengths. There was no longer a 'house style' in British cinema, and good times lay ahead.

I spent my return flight anxiously looking ahead to 2014 and speculating on the chances of a repeat performance. Running through our recent funding decisions and recent cuts of works-in-progress, I'd say I'm cautiously optimistic. But my own analysis remains that members of the press are fickle and must be incredibly difficult to live with, and that this is a cyclical business and reasons above and beyond quality had funnelled a critical mass of good Brit films to Toronto in a single year.

The critical question is, how can we capitalise on this success?

The true benefit of a strong national showing is the confidence it inspires in filmmakers. The challenge for a public fund is to try to create a support system that allows filmmakers to

One focus for us is to find and support the nascent filmmakers who ought to be presenting at festivals in five or ten years' time



Heading south: *12 Years a Slave*

take risks and experiment, and that raises ladders of progression so that the industry can transcend this lurching from barren spells to purple patches. The Film Fund can be judged on the success of the 25 or so production funding decisions it makes each year but we are beholden to the quality of the work submitted.

One focus for us, then, is to find and support the standout nascent filmmakers who ought to be presenting at festivals in five or 10 years' time. My close colleagues have long been doing excellent work in talent development, as have our friends at Film4 and BBC Films. But it has become increasingly obvious that our small team could not do justice to the numbers of emerging filmmakers who need focused time and energy from their development executives. Also, there was the usual 'London' issue. Despite a nationwide reach, our radar was always somewhat scrambled by the day-to-day traffic of the funding HQ.

So it was with some pleasure and no small relief that we launched our new talent development programme at the Encounters short film festival in Bristol in September. The NETWORK (there is a reason for the '.') is a concerted push to unify the efforts of the national screen agencies as they WORK to develop the most promising New and Emerging Talent (you see what we did there?) with the aid of more resources, time and energy. The primary activity will be funding for short film and screenplay development to help filmmakers prepare for their first feature. It will only succeed if the partner organisations pull together to share and celebrate the filmmakers within their respective talent pools, and we at the Film Fund will be there to pick these filmmakers up as and when they are feature-ready.

Key to all of this is that persistent rallying cry for distinctive, original work. The UKFC made much of its ambition to build a sustainable film industry. I'd say the route to this is not through the mainstreaming of British cinema but by encouraging filmmakers to develop voices of note that attract loyal audiences and become financeable by repute.

Perhaps then we will be able to move through a calendar not with chewed nails and crossed fingers but with a renewed pride in our national cinema that inspires as much through its confidence and its preparedness for failure as through the more easy measure of box-office success. @bfiben

IN PRODUCTION

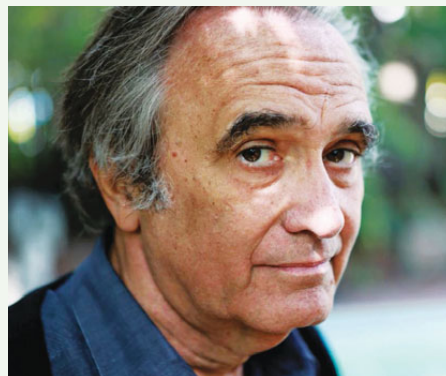
● **Ben Wheatley** is to follow *A Field in England* with an adaptation of JG Ballard's dystopian 1975 novel *High Rise*, in which the affluent inhabitants of a modern high-rise building start to turn on one another. Wheatley's regular writing partner Amy Jump is adapting the book, with Jeremy Thomas as producer – his name was first attached to the novel in the late 1970s, when Nicolas Roeg was slated to direct a script by Paul Mayersberg.

● **Zhang Yimou** has started shooting *The Return*, an adaptation of Yan Geling's novel *The Criminal Lu Yanshi*, which spans 70 years of Chinese history, telling the story of a professor forced into an arranged marriage and later persecuted for his political beliefs. Chen Daoming stars as the professor and Gong Li as his wife. The film is due for release in 2014.

● **Miguel Gomes**, whose short film *Redemption* played in Venice this year, is at work on his next feature, *One Thousand and One Nights*. The film is inspired by the structure of the classic Arab tale, though the stories here will explore the current economic crisis in Gomes's native Portugal. Real-life stories are being collected at the website www.as1001noites.com, some of which will be turned into the screenplay for the film.

● **Lenny Abrahamson** is to follow the forthcoming *Frank*, starring Michael Fassbender and Maggie Gyllenhaal, with an adaptation of the Irish-Canadian author Emma Donoghue's bestseller *Room*, about a five-year-old boy named Jack who has grown up in an 11-foot by 11-foot room that he believes to be the whole extent of the world.

● **Alex Garland**, whose writing credits include *Sunshine*, *Dredd*, *28 Days Later* and *Never Let Me Go*, is to make his debut as a director with *Ex Machina*. The film is reportedly a thriller in which a young internet coder spends a week at the mountain retreat of his company's CEO. While there he finds he shares the retreat with the world's first truly artificial intelligence, housed in a beautiful robot woman.



● **Joe Dante** (above) is set to make *The Man with the Kaleidoscope Eyes*, a 1960s-set film about Roger Corman. Corman told the *Telegraph* earlier this year: "It's the story of how I made *The Trip* in the 1960s about LSD. I have a cameo role in the movie about it, playing the executive who didn't want me to make the film." Early rumours that Quentin Tarantino was to play Corman have, however, recently been quashed by Dante.

FILM CLASSICS

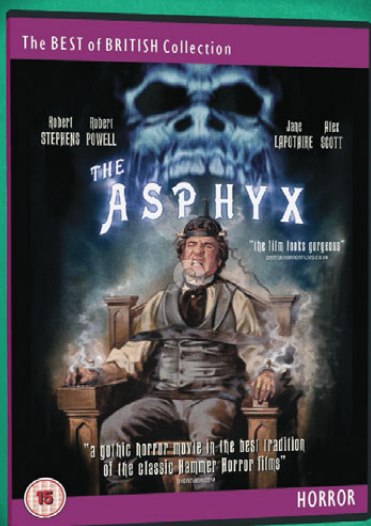
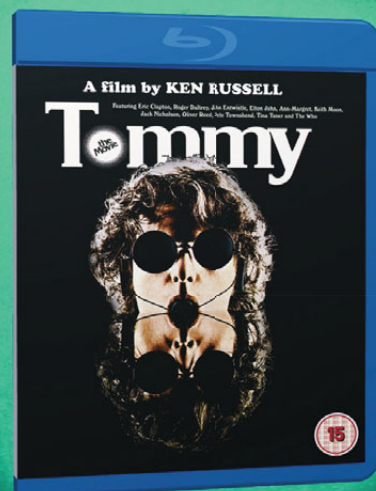
COMING SOON!

Tommy

Digitally Remastered (1975)

Finally on Blu-ray! Ken Russell's cinematic telling of The Who's psychedelic rock opera about a deaf, dumb and blind kid. Roger Daltrey, Oliver Reed, Elton John, Ann-Margaret, Eric Clapton, Keith Moon, Jack Nicholson & Tina Turner star!

Release Date - November 11th 2013 Available on Blu-ray



The Asphyx

Digitally Remastered (1973)

A Victorian aristocrat has a morbid fascination with photographing the dead. When his son's death in a horrific boating accident is caught on film, he discovers that a mysterious creature appears to consume the soul.

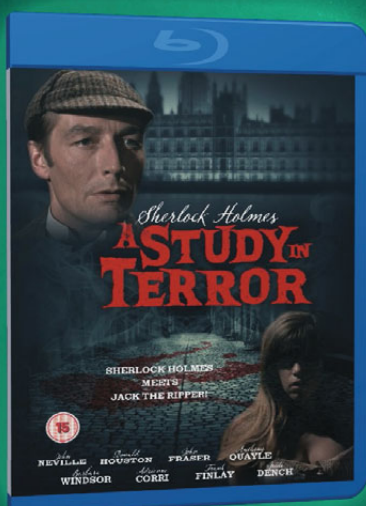
Release Date - October 14th 2013 Available on DVD

Lady For A Day

Digitally Remastered (1933)

A New York spin on Pygmalion and the major success which turned Frank Capra into an A-list director. Received four Oscar nominations, including Capra's first Best Director and the film's Best Picture nomination

Release Date - October 28th 2013 Available on DVD



A Study In Terror

Digitally Remastered (1965)

Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson find themselves on their most dangerous case in this gripping thriller When Holmes (John Neville) receives a chilling package in the post, he and Dr Watson (Donald Houston) find themselves on the trail of Jack the Ripper, the bloody killer of prostitutes.

Release Date - November 11th 2013 Available on both Blu-ray & DVD

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SITTING PRETTY

More and more artists are moving from gallery to cinema, but the transition can be painful. SoFA aims to cushion the blow

By Kieron Corless

Artists don't understand cinema and should keep their noses well out of it. I've heard that purist – you could say reactionary – viewpoint expressed by several cinephiles over the years, but never more trenchantly than by *Observer* film critic Mark Kermode, hyperventilating back in 2006 about the UK release of Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno's mesmerising real-time portrait film *Zidane, a 21st Century Portrait*.

You can check out Kermode's opinion in full on YouTube. Almost in spite of itself it raises pertinent questions: what attracts artists to the cinema? Do they bring something to it that regular filmmakers don't? Why such hostility from some cinephiles and film critics?

Whatever the case, the volume of traffic from gallery to cinema in recent years has been considerable. In the UK alone there have been McQueen, Sam Taylor-Johnson, Clio Barnard, Tracey Emin, Douglas Gordon, Gillian Wearing, Mark Aerial Waller and Shezad Dawood, and more are slated to follow. Look further afield and you've got Matthew Barney, Shirin Neshat, Julian Schnabel, Cindy Sherman and others. And let's not forget that Kathryn Bigelow was a visual artist before she became a filmmaker.

It's not a new phenomenon (think of Dali, Warhol), but the sheer numbers suggest a growing convergence internationally. SoFA (Soda Film + Art) was set up last year to capitalise on this situation. It's an offshoot of the UK film distribution company Soda, founded ten years ago by Eve Gabereau and Ed Fletcher and now firmly established as one of the sharper, more progressive distribution outfits on the UK feature film scene, with a slate that already boasts filmmakers like Ben Rivers and Jem Cohen, whose work arguably already sits in a liminal art/film space.

Gabereau and Fletcher set up the SoFA agency with Elena Hill, who brings long experience of working with artists and art world institutions, having produced and curated a wealth of artists' moving image work. SoFA's aim according to its press release is to bring together "visual artists and filmmaking across finance, production, distribution and sales, alongside associated publishing and online businesses" – to be a facilitator, in other words, connecting people, money and ideas.

Hill takes up the story. "It's about creating a commercial structure that works for the benefit of the artists, but that doesn't really exist at the moment. I think it's important for the artist to work with a producer who understands the way they work, but will also help them understand how the film industry works too... We offer lots of industry contacts – producers, sales agents, distributors, speciality finance, film festivals, marketing. We're an agency that can take the artist from idea through the whole process, and nurture them too."



SoFA, so good: Ed Fletcher, Elena Hill and Eve Gabereau

It's not difficult to foresee the potential pitfalls for the established artist trying to get a project off the ground – raising substantial amounts of money for a start. Gabereau points to the hurdle of film world acceptance: artists on SoFA's slate already well advanced in pre-production include Omer Fast and Mark Lewis – first-time directors to the film world, despite their many short and medium-length films for the gallery circuit. SoFA would aim to alter such perceptions by, as Gabereau says, "putting them in the context of their skills and experience".

Another possible obstacle is the way some artists will present their ideas – almost certainly not in the heavily formatted script treatment beloved of film funding bodies. "It could be a visual treatment rather than a script," suggests Gabereau, "or ideas for scenes, storyboards, drawings." SoFA's role in that case would be to smooth the path to mutual understanding. In addition, most artists will be used to a different set of working practices and preconceptions, and virtually complete freedom in terms of artistic decisions – no producers telling them their ideas are unworkable, too expensive, or plain crap, for example. Few high-end artists toil alone in a studio these days; more typically, they have a large team of assistants. Still, directing a team of 40 or more technicians on a film shoot could be a challenge at first. SoFA's role would be to make the transition as painless as possible.

Important in all this is the relationship with

A feature film production can take two years out of an artist's life – two years he or she could have been making saleable art

the gallery that looks after the artist. A feature film production can take up to two years out of an artist's life – two years he or she could have been making saleable art. What's in it for the gallery apart from, maybe, a raised profile? "There's the potential to make an edition, or an exhibition, that goes with the film," explains Gabereau. "And an element of the financial models for the productions we're working on will be to get collectors to invest in the film in exchange for an equity position and a numbered signed edition."

Key to the SoFA *modus operandi* is an artist-led, project-led flexibility. "We are open to co-productions with other producers, or we can be sole producers, as with the Mark Lewis film *Invention* (in partnership with NFB of Canada)," Gabereau says. "Soda would look to be distributor on our films, but there could be a different UK distributor if it seems right for the film. And SoFA is not just a UK company, we're willing to travel, and through our connections reach out internationally to find the right partner for our project."

An example is probably the most exciting-sounding film on their slate: an adaptation of British writer Tom McCarthy's brilliant cult novel *Remainder*, which will start shooting in January 2014 with artist Omer Fast at the helm. UK producer Natasha Dack developed the project and originally approached Fletcher and Gabereau for UK distribution through Soda. It transpired that SoFA was able to raise additional funds through a group of private investors/art collectors who are interested in the commercial and cultural crossover of the two worlds. On paper at least it seems a bold, utterly inspired combination of project, artist-director and writer. Get that one right and SoFA will without question be flying off the blocks. 

VENICE

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME



It's all right, ma: *Home from Home* – *Chronicle of a Vision*

Period sagas, dysfunctional families, alien man-eaters and camels – the 70th Venice Film Festival covered the waterfront

By Nick James

If there was one abiding theme underlying the Venice selection it was the meaning of 'home'. It seems right to start, then, with the latest instalment of the German director Edgar Reitz's career-long series of films entirely devoted to that question. Yet ***Home from Home – Chronicle of a Vision*** (*Die andere Heimat – Chronik einer Sehnsucht*) is not an update of the progress of characters we've met before in *Heimats I, II* and *III*, or even their grandchildren, but rather a prequel.

The action takes place in Schabbach, the same fictional Hunsrück village as before, and we recognise the family name Simon; but here the head of the family is the local blacksmith and the time is the 1840s. Johann Simon (Rüdiger Kriesche) has two young sons, Jakob (Jan Dieter Schneider) an adolescent dreamer, and Gustav (Maximilian Scheidt), a more pragmatic sort who returns from study just as Johann is getting fed up with Jakob's bookish ways. What unfurls from there – over 230 minutes – is a saga that combines Jakob's dreams of South America, the rivalry of the brothers over a local girl, and a

panoramic view of village life in revolutionary times, climaxing with an exodus of Hunsrückians for Brazil. Tonally, the film travels between sharp irony and a bathos sometimes worthy of *Downton Abbey*. As a film set in pre-First World War Germany and shot beautifully in black and white, it has the misfortune of reminding us of Haneke's superior *The White Ribbon*. None the less, it is a fascinating and rewarding portrait.

Journeys in search of a new home included Rick Ostermann's well-crafted ***Wolfskinder***, about German children in 1946 trying not to get shot or raped or both by Russian soldiers as they look for a friendly Lithuanian family their dead mother knew. But the film resembles too closely Cate Shortland's better-constructed *Lore*. The American director John Curran's ***Tracks*** is a consistently stimulating recreation of Robyn Davidson's real-life 1977 trek across the Australian outback with three camels, explained as a symptom of a yearning to emulate her father's African travels. The landscape photography is suitably epic and compelling yet, although Mia Wasikowska is outstanding as Davidson, the lack of dramatic incident in a film this sumptuous begins to tell after a while.

Stephen Frears's ***Philomena*** is a different sort of on-the-road crowd-pleaser. The script by Steve Coogan and Jeff Pope, based on Martin Sixsmith's book *The Lost Child of Philomena Lee*, is perfectly pitched at the 'grey market'. The

true story concerns the quest of an elderly Irish woman to discover the fate of the illegitimate son she bore in the 1950s – he was taken away from her by the hierarchy of the Catholic convent she was forced into (as a laundry worker), and sold to an American couple. The film won the script prize here, deservedly, but Frears too is on his best form, shepherding the audience through a wryly humorous mission without much recourse to sentimentality. Philomena and Sixsmith go to the US to investigate her

Tsai Ming-Liang returns to his favourite motif of people living in dilapidated buildings that leak from the ever-present rain



Rainy day women: *Stray Dogs*

son's life, only to encounter barriers to the truth. With Judi Dench on top sly form as Philomena, Coogan, as the often nonplussed Sixsmith, is required to up his usual game. He makes a great Watson-like foil to Dench's wise owl, who's stately in her understanding of her own ignorance. It should be a huge hit.

Comparisons between several films about the meaning of home and community can make them seem richer than they are. Jean Denizot's **La Belle Vie**, for instance, is a drama based on the real-life case of a father who for many years raised his two boys while living incognito on the run from the law (which had awarded custody to their mother). The film is charming in its way, but for me Denizot has chosen the least crucial moment in his protagonists' lives, when the boys are almost adult and the issue of parenthood matters less. James Franco's studied adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's novel **Child of God** is a tour de force of acting. Scott Haze's in-your-face performance as backwoods wildman Lester Ballard – all tics and snorts and menacing growls – is impressive, as this half-crazed, not bright, filthy loner scratches a living in the forest after being run off what was once his father's property. But the film gets confused between sympathy with Ballard's plight and a focus on his primal urges. He happens upon a dead young couple in a car, the opportunity of the girl's beautiful corpse is too much for him to resist, and soon young girls are disappearing in numbers. Wearisome for more complicated reasons is David Gordon Green's **Joe**. Nicolas Cage is a local ex-con who, despite being a magnet for trouble, becomes the role model for a 15-year-old boy whose real father is a mean, violent, evil drunk. It's a piece of macho mythology that's too respectful of its bookish origins, with dialogue that often sounds like writing. It only comes alive in patches, such as the scene where Cage teaches the boy how to do the 'cool' face – "Give me your nastiest face. That's it. Now smile but don't change the face."

With **Stray Dogs**, Tsai Ming-Liang returns to his favourite motif of people living in dilapidated buildings that leak from the ever-present rain. This time it's a father (Lee Kang-Sheng) and two children who've fallen on hard times. When he's not standing all day by the side of motorways, holding up advertising boards in the lashing wind and rain, he drinks. There are three women (or three actresses playing the same woman) who want to take the children away. They behave as if the children need to be gathered in each evening, like the wild pack of dogs the woman/mother feeds every night. Tsai Ming-Liang's preoccupations place him somewhere between the cinema and the gallery, and the striking of that balance here is dead on. Startling visual compositions abound, as much for their own sake as for their storytelling efficacy. The mother figure shins up trees in high heels; the father tries to punt his children out on to a lake in a storm, inside the deserted building where they sleep; a huge mural transfixes the mother as if it were a television set. One shot – foregrounding one of the actresses in close-up, with Lee standing just behind her – lasts for perhaps eight minutes (I didn't time it), and seems a significant event in the evolution of slow cinema. If nothing else, *Stray Dogs* is unforgettably vivid. ➔

VENICE: DIARY

A CASE FOR ZEN

After years of going to festivals as a critic, it comes as a shock to find yourself being one of the attractions

By Gabe Klinger

"I am delighted to confirm that your film is officially invited," read a PDF dispatch from Alberto Barbera, director of the Venice Film Festival, which arrived in my inbox shortly after lunch on 29 July. I high-fived my producers, Sonia and Nicolas, and then each of us began to respond to the demands as they flooded in. "You may designate up to 20 people from your delegation to receive an accreditation," read one email. It dawned on me that having a film in a major showcase like Venice is slightly more involved than attending a festival to watch films.

I've been going to festivals for the last 13 years as a critic and occasionally juror – which amps the glamour level slightly – but never as a filmmaker: my first film is a conversation piece about two of my favourite directors – *Double Play*: James Benning and Richard Linklater.

Before we sent back the confirmations, my producers asked me earnestly, "So we'll have a film to deliver, right?" I reassured them that I'd do whatever it took to finish it – after all, it was for Venice, the world's oldest film festival. A month later, after marathon sessions of colour correction, sound mixing, title design and special effects, I was in a water taxi on my way to the Lido.

"Did they check the film?" I asked Elena, our 'dedicated contact' (ie, festival babysitter) on arrival. She said, "I guess no news is good news?" Gulp. There were still five suspenseful days before the screening, and seeking distraction, I did what anyone with an all-access badge should do: watch five movies a day and engage in lively discussion with friends. Occasionally I'd check in with our publicity team (yes, we had one!): "Any

interview requests?" "Not today, Gabe." And back in the screening room I'd go.

Over those five days, the most frequent (and eventually annoying) question I'd get was, "Hey, when's your premiere?" Rather than tell the inquisitor to consult the programme, which they often had in their hands, I'd smile and say, "Tuesday!" But would they come or were they just making small talk? The first press screening for the Errol Morris doc was scheduled directly after our film, without much leeway in case of a delay. And a lot of people would already be gone to Toronto. I tried to be zen, and decided going to the beach could soothe me. My friend Simon Field suggested I see Kim Ki-duk's film about penile amputation instead.

The premiere finally arrived and the film played without a hitch (no news was good news). Though most of my friends fled to the Morris after the credits, our team lingered around. We did it – but what had we done? Did they like it? It was too soon to know anything. As the evening whittled down, our publicists Viviana and Aurélie told me that a single interview request had come in. Well, we hadn't exactly set the Lido on fire.


A few days later, sitting in the Volpi theatre, I was about to watch a restoration of Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946) when Elena found me and said, "I need to talk to you right now." Was I in trouble? Had someone died? Outside the screening room

Occasionally I'd check in with our publicity team: 'Any interview requests?' 'Not today, Gabe.'

was a group of festival officials, who told me that our film had won a Lion for Best Documentary on Cinema: would I stay an extra night? The next day, at the photocall following the press conference announcing our award, the dozens of photographers who had previously ignored me snapped away energetically. Walking away with flashbulbs still popping in my retinas, I found a Maserati waiting to take me and my Lion home. ☺



Richard Linklater and James Benning in *Double Play*

 Audience pleasure doesn't come into Alexandros Avranas's **Miss Violence**, which won the Silver Lion – a gruelling drama about a family striving to keep its secrets after a daughter's suicide. It's pretty easy to guess broadly in what area those secrets might be, given that the family behave around the grandfather (Themis Panou, who won Best Actor) like well-drilled automatons. But Avranas's handling of the slow reveal and the geography of the family apartment – to which the action is mostly confined – is extraordinary: the film could not have been better acted and constructed to achieve its grim intensity. You'll recognise the tone as reminiscent of the group of Greek talents that brought us *Dogtooth* and *Attenberg*, but this is a more conventional work, one that harks back to Attic tragedy as much as forward to more eccentric visions.

A classic fish-out-of-water scenario, Xavier Dolan's **Tom at the Farm** promised much that it doesn't deliver. The film, derived from Michel Marc Bouchard's play, is about Tom, a young media sophisticate (played by Dolan himself) whose boyfriend has died. He arrives at the Quebecois farm of his lover's mother and brother only to get embroiled in a sado-masochistic psychodrama to do with preserving the mother's illusions and keeping the farm going. The set-up is handled well but plausibility doesn't survive Tom's mechanistic flip-flopping (he wants to stay, escape, stay, escape), and Gabriel Yared's gobsmackingly overripe score makes the lack of anything believable at stake yawn like a chasm. More disappointing yet was Bruce La Bruce's **Gerontophilia**: it comes on like a great B-movie, about the young male protagonist's sexual yen for the old men he looks after in a retirement home, but all-round shaky performances dilute the provocative fun.

I'm not sure what it means if I say **Moebius** is my favourite ever Kim Ki-duk film, since I'm no great admirer of his usual all-for-effect nastiness, but this hilariously overwrought castration complex horror-comedy makes you wince and laugh alternately. A spurned mother takes revenge for her husband's infidelities by cutting off their teenage son's member. The father then has his own removed and preserved for his son. The mother disappears, leaving the two males to seek strange forms of self-torture that induce non-penile orgasm. Adding to the fun are the father's corner-shop mistress and the leader of a street gang of rapists, whose own misfortune sees him rushing to save his organ from being squished by oncoming traffic. The thwarted promise of sex is also at the centre of Jonathan Glazer's remarkable **Under the Skin**, in which Scarlett Johansson plays a young woman semi-provocatively dressed in red lipstick, furs and ripped tights, whose purpose is to cruise the streets of Glasgow in a car seeking out easily led men. Otherwise, this long-awaited adaptation of Michel Faber's novel bears little resemblance to anything the novelist imagined. We find out straight away that the woman's clothes are taken from a dead girl, so we know she's up to some kind of alien malefaction. But *Under the Skin* is not so much about her mission; it's more of a meditative species encounter – albeit with spectacularly



Nothing was delivered: Tom at the Farm

The long-awaited adaptation of Michel Faber's 'Under the Skin' bears little resemblance to anything the novelist imagined

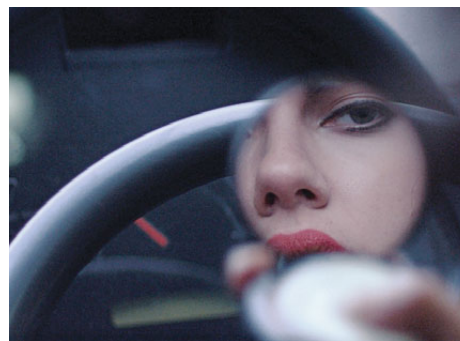
imagined interludes – in which compassion acts as a virus but is then met by an equal callousness. We may be talking about a future classic here.

I can't say the same about Paul Schrader's **The Canyons**, a lunkish conspiracy tale about a rich control-freak movie producer who finds out that his girlfriend – whom he regularly encourages to take part in swinger encounters – is having an affair with a young actor she knew before. Given the thinness of the L.A. soap scenario, and Schrader's much-reported difficulties with lead actress Lindsay Lohan, the film feels complete despite itself, and perhaps its embrace of digital-era TV movie cinema is true to the aesthetic of screenwriter Bret Easton Ellis's recent novels. Still, not even Schrader's book-ending of chapters with images of abandoned cinemas can rescue it from the redundancy of something you only watch because you've got nothing better to do: maybe that's the point.

Kelly Reichardt likes to put neuroathenic types into tough situations: in **Night Moves**, three eco-terrorists preparing and carrying out a raid on a dam. As in the great macho sabotage movies, character is action: loner organic farmhand Josh (Jesse Eisenberg) gets together with idealistic spa-worker Dena (Dakota Fanning) to buy a speedboat and drive it upstate to join his up-for-anything friend Harmon (Peter Sarsgaard) – only to find that they haven't got enough fertiliser for the bomb. This complication gives us a chance to see the superb, restrained and utterly convincing




Father of night: Miss Violence



Sad-eyed lady of the lowlands: Under the Skin

cast working off each other. Given the job of persuading the local dealer to part with 500lb of fertiliser, Dena finds her driving licence isn't adequate as ID, and applies her charms with an apt subtlety. After that set-piece, it's pure action – until the results of the raid are known and the film tips into a less certain kind of drama, in which the consequences of their actions show the trio's true characters. Some have said that a purer film would have just stuck to the raid, but for me this *film noir*-like segment pinpoints the thin line between ordinary behaviour and the unthinking propagation of terror.

It was a particularly strong year at Venice for documentaries. Of the four most prominent, the weakest was Alex Gibney's *The Armstrong Lie*, in which he returns to make sense of an abandoned film about the 2009 comeback of drug-cheat cyclist Lance Armstrong in the light of his subsequent confession. Maybe the story is too well known and Armstrong too repellent, because I found the film glassy and repetitive. On the other hand, Wang Bing's 227-minute study of a south-western Chinese mental hospital, **'Til Madness Do Us Part** (*Feng ai*) is a necessarily grim experience. The inmates are mostly restricted to a balcony around a quadrangle, off which are the rooms in which they sleep. Wang tracks the behaviour of an inmate up to a definitive moment when a caption gives their name and how long they've been an inmate – usually many years. I'm not sure how much the long duration of this film helps its subjects, but it is hard to forget.

I was underwhelmed by Errol Morris's **The Unknown Knowns**, his attempt to put former US secretary of state Donald Rumsfeld on the spot over the Iraq war in much the same way that he quizzed former secretary of defence Robert McNamara about Vietnam in *The Fog of War*. Though Morris had access to a ton of memos, Rumsfeld's just too canny and guarded to be revelatory. Much more satisfying is Frederick Wiseman's **At Berkeley**, a carefully chosen montage of sequences shot on the campus of America's most well-regarded public university. What's brilliant about this are the connections you can make yourself between lectures on law, time, budgetary committee meetings, student cuts, protest speeches, etc. Anyone who has ever worked in an institution will find it fascinating, especially since, knowing the camera is there, even the cops are on their most articulate form. 



Philomena is released on 1 November and is reviewed on page 68

"A PIERCING, TENDER POEM ABOUT
THE BITTERSWEET EBB AND FLOW
OF PATERNAL LOVE" ★★★★★

ROBBIE COLLIN - THE TELEGRAPH



EASTERN KICKS



RICH CLINE - SHADOWS ON THE WALL

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

THE NEW FILM BY **HIROKAZU KORE-EDA**



AT WHAT POINT DOES A FATHER TRULY BECOME A FATHER.



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IN CINEMAS OCTOBER 18TH



DEAD MEN WALKING
Left, Boris Karloff as the monster, amid an eerie, studio-created landscape in James Whale's classic sequel *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935).

SHADOWLANDS

Shapeshifting, all-devouring, steeped in blood – the gothic tradition has grown into a monster of terrifying size and limitless appetites, swallowing other genres and lurking in every corner of our culture. Now, a major BFI season brings it back into the limelight

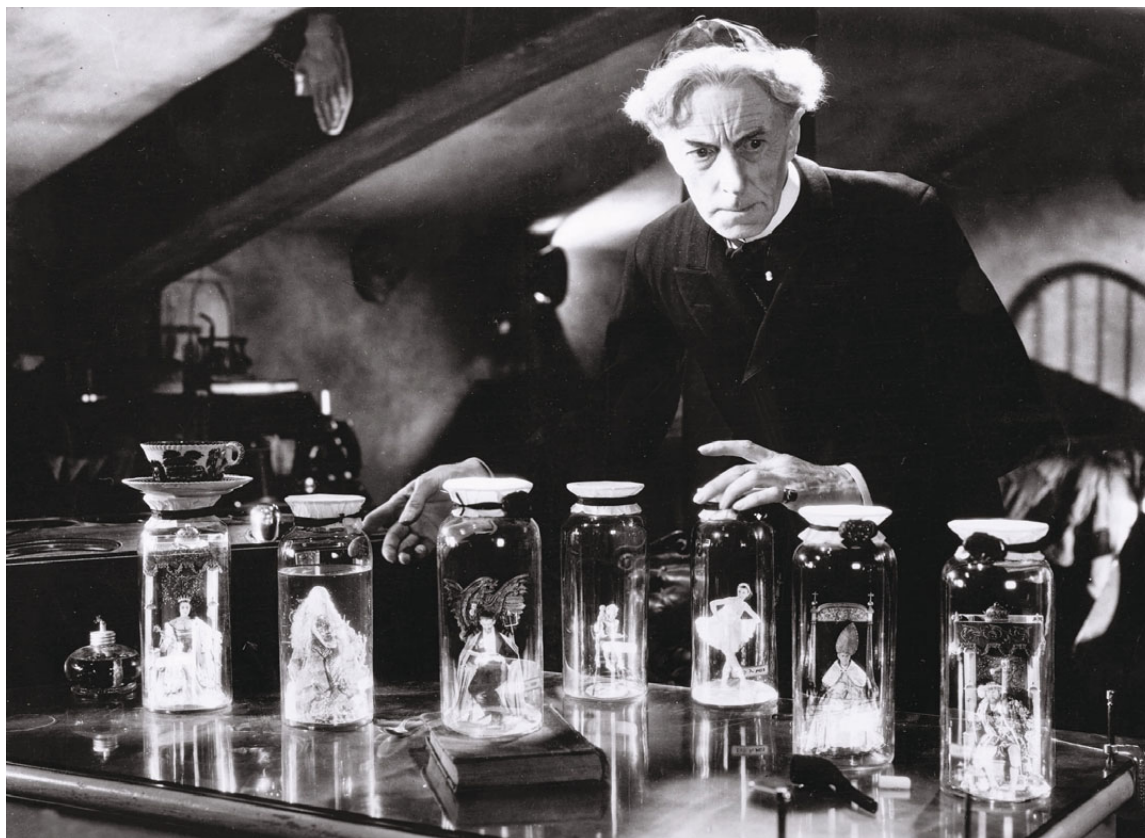
By Rhidian Davis

Where to begin? Perhaps it is a dark and stormy night. Or perhaps the clouds hang oppressively in the heavens. Perhaps the moon is on the wane and the silent leaves are still in the shadow of the hill. To approach the subject of the gothic is to take a journey along a long, twisting road to an old dark house. Steeling yourself against the insufferable gloom, you approach the ancestral pile. Inside, Bram Stoker baits Lord Byron before the looming stone mantel, offering up his neck in exchange for eternity. Mary Shelley, all in black, rocks neurotically back and forth, cradling her dead child, cursing her living creation. The shrieks of Matthew Lewis, condemned forever to circle the walls at night, no longer bother Edgar Allan Poe, soaked in laudanum, whose devilish game of cards with Sheridan Le Fanu is nearly at an end, the virtue of his young cousin almost played out. Meantime the ghost of Horace Walpole ambles through the crooked corridors crying out that it was he who built this cursed place. “Stuff and nonsense”, says Ann Radcliffe, “I can explain it all...”

It was a host of half-breed human-supernatural creatures and a visceral desire for terror that came to life on film, not the tortuous prose of the gothic novel, the corpus of which was ransacked for its vital organs, the rest discarded. A cinematographic special effect then transfused into them the lifeblood of other arts – of painting, design, theatre and performance. F.W. Murnau raised Nosferatu from the shadows through

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NUTS AND BOLTS

Above, Ernest Thesiger as mad Doctor Pretorius, plus homunculi, in *Bride of Frankenstein*. Below, Boris Karloff as the definitive monster



A TEENAGE DREAM SO HARD TO EAT

Opposite, clockwise from top, teen vamps Kiefer Sutherland and Jami Gertz in *The Lost Boys* (1987); Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart in *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1*; John Amplas in *Martin* (1976)



German expressionism, and destroyed him not with a stake through the heart, but with the power of light; Rouben Mamoulian created a sensation by turning debonair Dr Jekyll into the awful Mr Hyde in tight close-up without a blink, through the ingenious application of colour filters; Terence Fisher pushed the boundaries by engorging Hammer Films' creations with as much Technicolor blood, gore and sex appeal as the censors could abide, every scene a sumptuous coronation for those Kings of Horror, Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee.

Frankenstein is the creation myth that underpins the cinema: an art of obsessive assembly, sparked into movement through the crackle of electricity. Little wonder that Mary Shelley's ghastly tale of one man's drive to bring a magnificent being to life – tactically sidelining Nature's bountiful gift of procreation – was first adapted for the screen as early as 1910 by Edison Studios. But it was James Whale's 1931 retelling of the story for Universal, pivoting round Boris Karloff's iconic portrayal of a tormented child-monster with a bolt through his neck, that defined the cinematic Frankenstein. The process of adaptation from page to stage to screen stripped the story of its cross-continental drift, its perspective of multiple narrators, and the creature of his vengeful articulacy. Whale borrowed liberally from fine art: from Piranesi's etchings of fantastical interiors to build his laboratory; from Goya's *Los Caprichos* to design his monster make-up; from Otto Dix's war-ruined figures for his shocked and sewn-together body; from Fuseli's *Nightmare* to steal into Elizabeth's bedchamber.

But did he deal a hand of tarot cards into the mix? There's The Tower of Frankenstein's laboratory, struck by lightning, destined to fall; there's The Hanged Man,

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whose borrowed cadaver begins it all; the blind Hermit... Then, in *Bride of Frankenstein*, Doctor Pretorius, the acidly camp alchemical Magician, produces his bell-jars of charming, animated homunculi: the Queen and mischievous King; the Archbishop caught between dozing and divine proclamation; the languorous Devil, dainty Dancer and weedy Mermaid, all just about traceable to the figures of the tarot's major arcana.

It doesn't matter whether Whale was aware that his film images bear an uncanny resemblance to the tarot. Perhaps it was the Devil's work? In creating his world of gods and monsters, he was drawing on and refining a powerful set of archetypes to forge the psycho-symbolic landscape of Universal horror. The great vitality of the gothic lies in the transformation of these archetypes – uncannily familiar figures playing out recurring narrative tropes – into profound and sometimes very modern fables, expressing our fears and beliefs, struggles and torments. The myriad subgenres that are the legacies of the gothic, from Conan Doyle's detective fiction and *film noir* to the modern horror film, and today's teen-vampire flicks and zombie romcoms, can feel a long way from that unhomely old dark house of memory. But it was never really about Victorian revival pinnacles, Edwardian raiment, and an attendant aesthetic conspiracy of gloom and dread – the one we've come to feel so comfortable with. The gothic is about mystery: the mysteries of the past, and of what lies beyond accepted thresholds of reality; the mysteries of what cannot be controlled by science; of sexual power and of charisma; of the demonised and the repressed; of the mystical and the dead.

Mythic archetypes, like vampires, have a whiff of the eternal about them, but they mix their blood with ordinary humans and get tangled in worldly affairs,

Mythic archetypes, like vampires, have a whiff of the eternal, but they mix their blood with ordinary humans and get tangled in worldly affairs



which come to mould their evolution. The brooding, powerful, secretive and sexually alluring figure who stands behind Lord Ruthven, Dracula, Rochester – and even Bruce Wayne, whose alter ego's winged silhouette was borrowed from his vampire forebear – is Lord Byron, the prototype aristocratic hero-villain and original Prince of Darkness (building on Satan's early work on the character, of course). Vampirism eventually shed its fancy dress, and reinvented itself beyond a decadent aristocracy living off the blood of its social inferiors. George A. Romero's twisted teenager *Martin* (1976) tried to cut the bloodline with a social realist manifesto – "There's no real magic... ever" – but Anne Rice's crushed velvet *Interview with a Vampire* was published the same year, and there was more than a little Byronic inspiration in *The Lost Boys*' 1980s lifestyle mantra: "Sleep all day, party all night. Never grow old. It's fun to be a vampire."

Bella Swan's moody undead boyfriend in *Twilight*, Edward Cullen, can trace his genealogy back through to this paternal line of hell-raisers. Cullen may be trying to keep his powers and lustful hunger under wraps, but he still holds the key to that timeless fantasy for any gothic heroine, the jaw-droppingly gorgeous family house. It may be modernist concrete and slatted wood, a far cry from Castle Dracula – or from Hill House, the pile that Julie Harris's Eleanor will stake her soul to stay in, in Robert Wise's *The Haunting* – but it still speaks to that timeless querent's anxiety: will he just try to suck the life out of me, or will I get my hands on the castle?

The woman in black, that indentured resident of the great old dark houses of Great Britain, began as a stalking nun, like Matthew Lewis's Bloody Nun in *The Monk*, but when the black-satin-sheathed Swiss murderess Mrs Maria Manning went to the gallows in real



BLACK LOOKS

Top to bottom: Daniel Radcliffe in *The Woman in Black* (2011). *The Shining* (1980). Beatie Edney and Jane Lapotaire in *The Dark Angel* (1989)



life, a host of writers immortalised her in their fiction, as ghost writer Roger Clarke has observed: Le Fanu's wickedly black Madame de la Rougierre in *Uncle Silas* – played to damnable perfection by Jane Lapotaire in the BBC's 1989 adaptation, *The Dark Angel* – and Lady Dedlock's murderous servant Mademoiselle Hortense in Dickens's *Bleak House*. You can see her also in Mrs Danvers, immortalised on film by Judith Anderson, whose pure archetypal power is unforgettably unleashed by Hitchcock as her coal-black silhouette darts about the windows of the burning house, a living end that you feel will endure for as long as we return to Manderley in those recurring dreams. It's no surprise, then, to see that shadow darting from room to room in the Daniel Radcliffe vehicle *The Woman in Black*, now condemned to prey forever upon living children out of malignant grief for a lost one. The same curse afflicts the dark woman of the woods who comes to stay with Jessica Chastain and play with her stepchildren in the Guillermo Del Toro-produced film *Mama*.

Even the old dark house itself, so central to gothic lore, has a social history. Underpinned by the old foundations of the mythic labyrinth and the medieval castle, the old dark house surges into prominence with the Anglo-Irish 'Big House' novels of Edgeworth, Le Fanu and Maturin, books based around the very real palatial structures of a land-owning British colonial class – houses built, let's face it, to express their power and manage their dominion. Since then, the old dark house in gothic horror has almost constitutionally been founded on plundered and ill-gotten lands, as in the case of *The Shining's* Overlook Hotel, built on that ubiquitous Stephen King piece of dubious real estate: the native American burial ground.

The plundering of Ancient Egyptian tombs in the name of archaeology, following the imperial occupation of Egypt in the late 19th century, unleashed a wave of superstition that brought the returning mummy to walk among the living dead of the Western gothic tradition. Universal's classic *The Mummy* was penned by John Balderston, who, as a journalist in the 1920s, had attended the final unveiling of Tutankhamun's face from beneath his death mask in 1925. As the writer and cultural critic Roger Luckhurst has noted, Karloff's Imhotep is really the bad conscience of the West's scramble for ancient loot in the Valley of the Kings.

In the Hammer Films version, directed by Terence Fisher in 1959, for all that Christopher Lee's mournful eyes command attention as Kharis, it is the fez of Mehemet Bey, devotee of the god Karnak played by George Pastell, which is the scene-stealer, massively over-signifying in glowing Technicolor scarlet. The film's pivotal confrontation – in which Cushing's archaeologist tells Bey that it is the endemic violence of Egypt, from ancient pagan sacrifices to the present day, that justifies Britain retaining its colonial treasures – was made just three years after the Suez catastrophe had made Egypt the graveyard of British imperial hopes. The mummy's return embodies the fear of Egyptian self-determination.

The Mummy's slavishly detailed reconstruction of the burial rituals of the Princess Ananka is just one example among many of gothic film's uncanny knack of appearing to bring back to life marginalised cultures and forgotten belief systems through art direction and sensationalist plot turns. In the case of Albin

THE POE PERPLEX

Between 1960 and 1964, a cycle of films based on Edgar Allan Poe's 'Tales of Mystery and Imagination' revived the gothic tradition and reinvented modern horror.

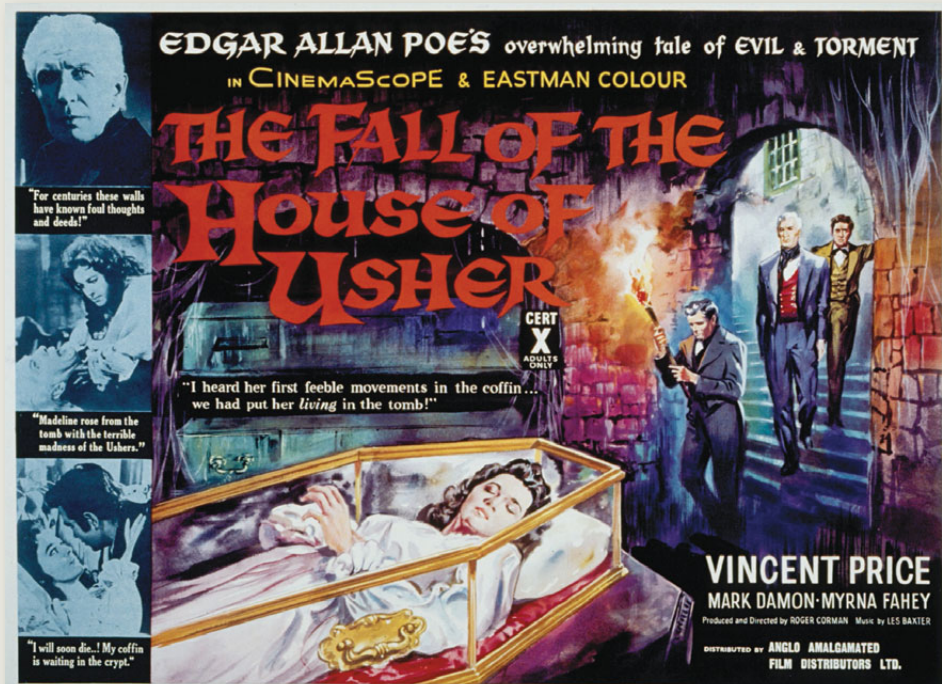
By Roger Corman

I first read 'The Fall of the House of Usher' as a teenager, and was so impressed by it that I asked my parents to give me the complete works of Edgar Allan Poe for Christmas. I read it cover to cover.

There is something inherently cinematic in Poe's stories: 'The Masque of the Red Death' lends itself to a colour picture; 'The Pit and the Pendulum', with the pendulum swinging back and forth, is a great cinematic moment. But I think it's more than just the cinematic quality that has meant his stories have continued to fascinate people, whereas some other gothic writers now appear to be dated. Poe in the 19th century was touching on the unconscious mind, creatively and artistically, in the same way Freud would touch on it later in the century from a medical or scientific standpoint. Poe's stories work on two levels: on the textual level of a horror story, but also subtextually there is much that hits the unconscious mind.

I made my first Poe picture, *House of Usher*, in 1960. I had been making a series of pictures for American International Pictures and Allied Artists: I would make two films on ten-day schedules for about \$80-90,000 each, and they would send them out together as a double bill. They were quite successful, but I was beginning to think they were repetitious. I wanted to move on, and hopefully up, so I said to Jim Nicholson and Sam Arkoff, who ran AIP, that instead of giving me \$80-90,000 to make two black and white films, why not put them together, let me have a 15-day schedule, shoot it in colour, and up the budget a little. My idea from the beginning was to make *House of Usher*. Sam Arkoff said, "But there's no monster!" Thinking quickly I said, "Sam, the house is the monster!" They agreed to back it. Jim called it *House of Usher*, because he believed in short titles, and I didn't think it made any difference. [The film was released as *The Fall of the House of Usher* in the UK].

Some of Poe's stories are so short that we decided to use the story only as the third act, and then write the beginning and middle section of the picture so that it would lead logically – we hoped – to Poe's story. We tried to keep them in the mood of what Poe might have written. Most



Grave error: the UK poster for *House of Usher*, Corman's first Poe-inspired movie

of the Poe films I made in America were written by Dick [Richard] Matheson. I have to give credit to him – some of the ideas were mine, but many of them were his.

Vincent Price was my first choice of actor from the beginning. I felt he had the same qualities that Roderick Usher had: he was very intelligent, well-educated, dignified, and very sensitive, possibly with a touch of neurosis. He and I worked on every one of the Poe pictures except for *The Premature Burial* (1962), where contractual problems meant that he was not available, so I went to Ray Milland who I felt had some of the same qualities.

When I work with young directors I tell them that you always have to have a theory about your film. It helps if the theory is right, but it's almost as good if it's wrong – at least it's something that unifies your film. As I said, I believe Poe was working with the unconscious mind, which is not aware of external reality – that's the province of the conscious mind. So for the Poe films I thought I should stay away from reality and shoot everything inside a studio, where I could create my own effects, my own unreality. On the few occasions when I had to go outside, I would find something a little bit apart from the real world. For instance, on *Usher*, there was a fire in the Hollywood Hills just before we started shooting; the area was black

and burned, with twisted, dead trees. I put together a small crew and shot the sequence where Philip Winthrop is riding to the House of Usher through the burned-out forest.

But things do become formulaic, so by the time I got to the last of my Poe pictures, *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964), I had grown tired of my own theory and decided to shoot most of it outdoors, in the English countryside. It was for similar reasons that on *Tales of Terror* (1962) and *The Raven* (1963) there was a definite attempt on the part of Dick Matheson and myself to introduce some humour.


I can't say that I was influenced by Hammer or Mario Bava when I started making my Poe films, because I hadn't then seen any of their films. However early in the Poe cycle I saw a Mario Bava film – I think it was *Black Sunday* [aka *Mask of Satan*] – which was very good. It was because of it that we hired Barbara Steele for *Pit and the Pendulum* (1961). Barbara Steele had a charisma and a face that was very beautiful, but indicated a possible tortured soul beneath the beauty. She was perfect for the role.

I stopped making the Poe pictures after *Ligeia* because I felt I'd done just about all that I could. I've been asked many times which of the Poe films is my favourite, and I sometimes reply *The Masque of the Red Death*, sometimes *Pit and the Pendulum*, or other times *The Tomb of Ligeia*. But really I can't choose – to me they're all of a roughly equal quality. ☺

As told to James Bell

i *The Fall of the House of Usher* is out on DVD and Blu-ray from Arrow Films. Roger Corman will be at BFI Southbank on 25 October to discuss his Poe adaptations

You have to have a theory about your film. It helps if the theory is right, but it's almost as good if it's wrong

 Grau, the producer and production designer for Murnau's *Nosferatu*, lifelong student of the occult and member of a German magical order called the Fraternitas Saturni, the engagement was quite serious. Grau had established his company, Prana-Film, for the explicit purpose of making occult productions. He was forced to flee to Switzerland in 1936, along with others, when his esoteric order was prohibited by the Nazis.

More usually on film and TV, pagan and occult symbolism have survived in the popular consciousness through recourse to a garish props cupboard, filled with the bric-à-brac of pentacles, candles and ritual daggers. There's little authenticity in the rituals of, say, Hammer Films' tale of an English village coven, *The Witches* (1966), whose climactic ritual orgy is choreographed like a scene from a West End musical; but there's often an irrepressible screen energy available to the Devil's party – usually an unholy cabal of outspoken women, effete men and 'foreign' types – that you just wouldn't see anywhere else. Where else would a woman express an unrepentant, intellectual lust for power, as Kay Walsh does playing coven-leader Stephanie Bax? Who could forget the malevolence of the grinning African demon played by Yemi Ajibade, briefly conjured into being in a pentagram in the upstairs room of an English manor house in *The Devil Rides Out* (1967)? As the Duc de Richleau, strutting about the grand buildings of Bray Studios, Christopher Lee's counter-rituals to ward off the forces of darkness look overwhelmingly now like the desperate measures of a frayed ruling class warding off the ghosts of empire.

It's impossible not to feel embarrassment at the great pantomime and portent of satanic ritual on film, the theatrical silliness of ceremonial masks, cultic diagrams, and the inevitable sacrifice of the young, pretty and hypnotised. These scenes did however carry, to a generation who grew up before Harry Potter put The Dark Arts on the national curriculum, a dangerously counter-cultural promise of power. I remember Sarah-Jane's first solo adventure after *Doctor Who*, *K9 and Company*, a 1981 pilot for a series that never materialised. Challenging a coven of witches arrayed against scientific advances in market gardening, Sarah-Jane, aided by her robotic dog and his powerful laser beams, crashes a winter solstice ceremony, revealing the identities of the back-to-nature plotters by ripping off their goat's-head masks. Not, however, before the name of the triple goddess, whom Zeus honoured above all others according to the Greek writer Hesiod, was chanted to 8.4 million viewers: "Hecate, Hecate, Hecate..." It was, for me, a beginning, not an end to a mystery.

Children are increasingly fanatical about fairytales and mad for magic according to a recent survey. Youngsters of nine and under are more likely to use fairytale references in their writing than older children, while 10- to 13-year-olds reveal a taste for the gothic in their use of darker words, according to research findings published by OUP and Radio 2 in *500 Words*, a project based on analysis of 40 million words submitted through a short story competition. The word 'magic' is on the rise, conjured up nearly 10,000 times (an increase of 7.5 per cent on 2012). Interestingly, in a separate survey carried out by the University of Maastricht, 74 per cent of 4- to 6-year-olds, and 53 per cent of 6- to 8-year-olds, but only 5 per cent of 10- to 12-year-olds, reported scary dreams involving ghosts and monsters. Pre-teens, it seems, are learning to master their



There's often an irrepressible energy available to the Devil's party – an unholy cabal of outspoken women, effete men and 'foreign' types – that you wouldn't see anywhere else

fears, drawing on stories and films and online worlds, and exploring their own creativity in order to reflect on and learn about their childhood terrors.

This, it strikes me, is the best audience for gothic films: the 13-year-old. Between worlds; still alive to magic; not yet old enough to stay out at night, but open to the possibilities of what lies in the darkness; broadly accepting of the game-changing moment when humans incarnate as gods, as K-Stew's Bella Swan does when she joins the immortals in *Twilight*. It's an audience quite attuned to strange and symbolic landscapes peopled by archetypal figures, through immersive game worlds, and not just through video and online games, but through the 'game worlds' of genre-munching monsters like the BBC's *Doctor Who*: televisual time machines that hungrily devour every plot and every character in every genre that has ever gone before and serve them up with a goodly dose of self-reference to adoring fans across the world. Perhaps this heady brew of dark magic, this immersion in a world of gods and monsters, which increasingly occupies the leisure hours of adults as well as children, will fade as other fashions do. Perhaps it will continue to be upgraded; rebooted. Who can predict the future? Perhaps a born-digital generation will come to believe, like Lewis Carroll's Alice, that this audiovisual Wonderland of regenerating archetypes is really just a pack of cards.



Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film runs at BFI Southbank and at venues nationwide to 31 January. See bfi.org.uk/gothic for full details

TWO TO TANGO
Gothic Hammer style. Top: *The Mummy* (1959), with Christopher Lee, George Pastell and that scene-stealing fez. Above: Kay Walsh and Ingrid Brett in *The Witches* (1966)

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THE INSTABILITY OF TRUTH

Building on the success of her documentary hybrid *The Arbor*, Clio Barnard's first venture into fiction, *The Selfish Giant*, explores life around scrap metal yards. Here she talks about the joys of working with children (and horses), making the move from artist's films to features, and growing up looking like Mick Jagger. **By Kate Muir**

The key to Clio Barnard's work is a radical pursuit of truth, by whatever means necessary. In the ground-shifting documentary *The Arbor* (2010), about the young playwright Andrea Dunbar, she had actors lip-sync to real-life testimony. In *The Selfish Giant*, the drama grew out of the meticulous documenting of a teenager's life in the underbelly of a Bradford estate. Both films are inspired by spirited lives lived in dispiriting circumstances. As a director, Barnard brings a fresh sensibility to British Loachian social realism: *The Selfish Giant* is not merely kitchen sink drama but an examination of the foul-smelling, leaky plumbing beneath. While a harrowing picture of Britain's lost underclass, the film also celebrates the funny, lunatic energy of a friendship between two 13-year-old boys, and their entrepreneurial entry into the scrap metal business.

Perhaps because Yorkshire-raised Barnard comes from an artist-filmmaker background – her earlier shorts were shown at London's Tate Modern and New York's MoMA – her Northern grit is delivered in an often elegiac and exquisitely photographed package. In *The Selfish Giant*, the moors beyond Bradford's Buttershaw Estate are populated by wild horses and dark, satanic pylons looming in the dusk. The film shows none of the wobbles of a first feature. At 48, Barnard seems to have landed here, fully formed as a filmmaker: *The Arbor* won awards at the BIFAs and the BFI London Film Festival, while *The Selfish Giant* played to critical acclaim in the Directors' Fortnight section at this year's Cannes.

Kate Muir: *The Selfish Giant* was inspired by the Oscar Wilde story about a giant who builds a wall to stop children playing in his beautiful garden...

Clio Barnard: That was a jumping-off point, quite a truthful fairytale in that it doesn't have a completely happy ending. It is about the wounds of love, what happens when you exclude children, put walls up and keep children out. Seeing demonised, criminalised working class boys infuriates me. Their value doesn't seem to me to be recognised or understood, so I made my two characters scrap metal dealers and copper thieves, seen as the lowest of the low, and asked the question: what is it that makes a child take the risks that *Arbor* and *Swiftly* take?

KM: After making *The Arbor* on the Buttershaw Estate, what made you want to stay there and research a feature?

CB: *The Selfish Giant* came out of the place and the people, in particular a 14-year-old boy called Matty, who was the first person I ever met on the estate. He had ADHD, didn't go to secondary school, and was working with horses and with a dodgy scrap guy. Some people thought that was an opportunity, and others thought he was being exploited, so I was interested in that ambiguity. What enchanted me was his unswerving loyalty to his best friend, nicknamed Pikey, whose family were often

ostracised. They became the basis for *Arbor* (Conner Chapman) and *Swiftly* (Shaun Thomas).

KM: The film comes from a lineage that includes *Huckleberry Finn* and *Kes*, but what were your other inspirations?

CB: One of the things that made me want to do it is a frustration about what contemporary films there are out there for children. I'd love for it to have been a children's film, but at a certain point I had to let go of it for a wider audience. It was partly inspired by watching films with my kids like *Kes* and *Bicycle Thieves* and the Dardennes brothers, and partly about wanting not to patronise kids in any way. I guess those are all realistic fables, full of symbolism and metaphor.

KM: You recruited your child actors from Buttershaw and another local estate. How did they change between the start of filming and the moment when we saw Conner shining up a palm tree in Cannes?

CB: They'd never been out of the country before. Conner and Shaun have both got an agent now, but what's important to know is they are acting, not playing themselves. Conner is shy and reserved, and had to play an extrovert kid, while Shaun is the opposite of his more meek character. They were just phenomenal: they completely carry the film. Sometimes Conner would find it hard to make eye contact, but he'd be listening when I gave him a note and his performance would change. Occasionally they'd complain about things, and some of it was tough. When you watch the rushes, Conner's under a rain machine, lying in the mud, and you can hear him muttering: "Pretend it's a warm shower, a warm shower."

KM: As a director you can obviously handle the worst – children and horses – but how did your visual arts background play into the look of the film, the mysterious images of the post-industrial hinterlands of Bradford?

CB: That's down to my very remarkable cinematographer Mike Eley, and we shot it on an Alexa, which was much more light sensitive than the RED camera we used on *The Arbor*. As for the directing, I'm quite long in the tooth, and I've been working behind the scenes and teaching film practice [at the University of Kent]. Film-making is an incredibly collaborative medium and I really love that. The editor I've worked with on almost everything I've done is Nick Fenton, and the sound designer was Tim Barker, and we knew each other, so there was a very easy creative flow between us.

KM: You've said you were tough on yourself when rewriting the script. Did you feel the critical eyes of the Buttershaw Estate upon you?

CB: I felt a huge weight of responsibility with *The Arbor*, and some of the stuff I do formally with *The Arbor* to address how difficult it is. I felt more comfortable with *The Selfish Giant*. It was more people asking me: "Why are you interested in us? We're normal." Which raises



SLIPPERY AUTHENTICITY
Above: Conner Chapman and Shaun Thomas in *The Selfish Giant* – 'what's important to know is they are acting, not playing themselves'. Below: Clio Barnard





its own questions about why I am interested. I am aiming at authenticity, but partly what my work's about is how slippery that truth or authenticity is. In *The Arbor*, the two sisters remember the incident with the bedroom fire so differently, and Andrea [Dunbar] has written a fictionalised version of her story which might contradict what her sister thought... all the layers of interpretation are there, but *The Selfish Giant* is a more straightforward linear narrative.

KM: It sounds like you subscribe to Werner Herzog's "poetic, ecstatic truth".

CB: I don't know about that exactly, but one film that changed me was *Rashomon*. I saw it when I was 16 or 17, and the question of the instability of the truth and its different versions stayed with me.

KM: You've said *Performance* was a big influence.

CB: When I was about 12 or 13, I had this obsession with Mick Jagger, and even weirder, people used to say I looked like him – very confusing to a 12-year-old girl. I noticed Jagger was in this film so I snuck the black-and-white portable TV up to my bedroom with the sound turned down so I didn't get caught. I didn't really know what I was letting myself in for, but it was amazing, particularly the bit where you go inside his head. I was very blown

away by it. I also remember when I was older going on a school trip to London and a group of us sneaked off to see *Salò (120 Days of Sodom)* at the NFT and on each seat there was a little piece of paper that said, "The excrement in this film is made of chocolate and broken biscuits". But I still had to hold the girl next to me who was absolutely terrified. Perhaps we were a bit young.

KM: You went on to study fine art at Newcastle and Dundee, so how did you cross over to film?

CB: I started by making records of my changing drawings using a hand-wound Bolex, then got very seduced by the film, printing it and processing it myself. I also had this attachment to narrative and at the time I was at art school, that was an absolute no-no. Narrative was evil. And I became obsessed with Hollis Frampton's (*nostalgia*) – it's a series of still images each being burned and the voiceover is describing the image in the following photograph. There's a complete disconnect of sound and image, and it's quite funny. Film is always trying to capture this moment of now, which you can't, ever, because immediately you've done that, it's in the past.

LFF *The Selfish Giant* is showing at the BFI London Film Festival. It is released in the UK on 25 October and is reviewed on page 89

Seeing demonised, criminalised working class boys infuriates me. Their value doesn't seem to me to be recognised or understood

THE TRAGIC MOUNTAIN

Filmed on the 1924 climbing expedition that cost George Mallory and Sandy Irvine their lives, 'The Epic of Everest' was more than a record of a heroic failure: it broke new ground and set new standards for documentary making – and had political effects that are still being felt

By Wade Davis



BECAUSE IT'S THERE George Mallory (above) and Sandy Irvine (top), ill-fated heroes of the third Everest expedition in 1924. John Noel, pictured opposite in a hand-tinted portrait, was among the last to see them, through the telephoto lens of his camera

John Noel was a soldier by profession but an artist in spirit, whose contributions as a pioneering photographer and cinematographer are only now, with the release of *The Epic of Everest* (1924), coming to be recognised. For British mountaineers, his name has always been associated with the three epic Everest expeditions of the 1920s which culminated in the disappearance of George Mallory and Sandy Irvine, last seen on 8 June 1924 cresting the North-east Ridge, going strong for the summit, when the clouds rolled in, enveloping their memory in myth. John Noel was among those at Camp 3 that day, peering through his telephoto lens toward the summit.

Noel was himself an intrepid explorer and veteran of the Himalaya. In 1913, at 23, he had stained his skin with walnut juice and slipped into Tibet in disguise, reaching as far as Tashirak, a mere 40 miles from Everest, before being forced back into Sikkim in north-western India by Tibetan soldiers. His stirring account of this expedition, delivered on March 10, 1919 at Aeolian Hall for the Royal Geographical Society, had been singularly responsible for setting in motion the chain of events that led to the reconnaissance expedition of 1921 and, the following year, the first British assault on the mountain, led by General Charles Bruce. But what earned him a place on the 1922 expedition was his remarkable skill as a visual artist, gifted with both technical understanding and creative appreciation of the new art of documentary filmmaking.

As a still photographer Noel had been deeply influenced by Vittorio Sella, the Italian pioneer who virtually established the art of mountain photography and invented the equipment that made it possible. Noel's inspiration in cinematography was Herbert Ponting, who documented Scott's Antarctic expedition of 1910-11, a film that Noel had watched 16 times before going to Everest.

Like Ponting and Sella, Noel would design or modify all of his kit for the conditions he would face. In addition to cameras, tripods, and thousands of feet of raw stock, he brought along a lightproof tent for processing film, developing tanks and chemical fixers, and for drying the negatives a specialized stove designed to burn yak dung. His camera was modelled after the 35mm Newton-

Sinclair model Ponting had used in Antarctica. Made of duralumin for lightness, it was 18 inches (45cm) long and a foot (30cm) high, with special bearings that required no oil and a protective rubber cover that allowed him to press his face against the eyepiece without fear of his skin sticking to the metal. The magazine held 400 feet – 122m – of film, which could be advanced by battery or a hand crank. The lens was a 20-inch Hobson telephoto, with optics honed during the First World War. Attached to the top of the camera was a customised six-power telescope for locating and identifying distant subjects on the mountain. Fully loaded, the camera weighed less than nine kilos (20lb).

Noel brought to the 1922 expedition not only state-of-the-art equipment, but also a sophisticated and thoroughly contemporary aesthetic, informed by a rare understanding of what the new medium of film implied. The technology, and the commercial industry it spawned, were barely 25 years old. The British public did not yet have a preference for features over documentaries, which competed head to head in theatres, each form having in common this new and astonishing capacity to conjure out of the darkness flickering images of wild and unimagined worlds. The most popular film produced during the war was the officially sanctioned *The Battle of the Somme*, released in August 1916 even as the battle raged. Though highly sanitised, its live footage and the graphic display of life at the Front stunned a nation largely unaware of the reality of the war.

With peace, documentary films unveiled the promise of distant lands, the exotic allure of escape. Noel's plans for Everest were very much part of a creative wave of adventure that throughout the 1920s propelled filmmakers to every corner of the world: Frank Hurley travelled to New Guinea, a journey that would yield *Pearls and Savagery* (1921), and Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) played in sold-out theatres across Britain, becoming the most popular ethnographic documentary of all time. It was all part of a greater quest, embraced readily by a tired and exhausted people, to show that the life and death of an individual could still have meaning, that the war had



not expunged everything heroic and inspired. The image of the noble mountaineer scaling the heights, climbing literally through a zone of death to reach the heavens, high above the sordid reality of the modern world, would first emerge from the imagination and through the lens of John Noel. Mallory on the mountain would famously complain to Noel that he had not come to Tibet to become a film star. But he had, whether he realised it or not. 'St. Noel of the Cameras' – as Charles Bruce affectionately called the filmmaker, who happened to be Catholic – would see to it. The two films Noel made, *Climbing Mount Everest* (1922) and *The Epic of Everest* (1924) transformed the challenge of the mountain into a national mission, a symbol of imperial redemption, even as they elevated Mallory, still a relatively unknown mountaineer, into the realm of the Titans. "If you had lived as they had lived,"

Noel would ask at the end of *The Epic of Everest*, "and died in the heart of nature would you, yourself, wish for any better grave?"


COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVES

John Noel's 1922 film, *Climbing Mount Everest*, had a disappointing premiere, and only modest success when it toured the country. Ultimately, it grossed £10,000 at the box office; but the Everest Committee – a joint enterprise of the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club which had organised and sponsored the expedition – made a profit of only £500. This setback did not for a moment deter the filmmaker. In June 1923 Noel made an unexpected and unprecedented offer to the Everest Committee. In exchange for all photographic and film rights to the upcoming 1924 expedition, he





PEAK PERFORMANCE
Above, left to right: an icefield on Everest, one of John Noel's hand-tinted images; Mallory and Irvine in the distance, shot with a telephoto lens; members of the expedition

 pledged to raise £8,000, an extraordinary sum in 1923. The terms of the deal were very specific. He would pay £1,000 upon signature, an additional £5,000 by December 31, the end of the year, and a final instalment of £2,000 by 31 March 1924. The Everest Committee for its part would guarantee diplomatic access to Tibet, facilitate his work in the field provided it was not in conflict with the goals and safety of the expedition, and provide equipment, three tents at Camp III, two on the North Col, as well as one oxygen apparatus and 5,000 litres of oxygen. The committee would have access to the photographs for promotional purposes and various publications, including the anticipated expedition account. But ownership would rest with Explorer Films, the company established by Noel to make all of this possible. Among his private investors were the Aga Khan and Sir Francis Younghusband, president of the RGS and chair of the Everest Committee, who also served as chairman of the board of the new enterprise.

It was an odd turning-point in mountaineering history. The quest for the highest summit slipped from imperial venture to commercial opportunity. The Everest Committee had no choice but to accept. The cash infusion transformed its bottom line. Noel's offer implied not only an investment of £8,000 but also a saving of £2,000, since the committee would no longer be responsible for paying for film and photographic costs. In a single gesture Noel shouldered all financial risks, even as he liberated the committee to move ahead aggressively with plans for a third expedition to the mountain.

Arriving in Darjeeling in March of 1924, the staging point for the Everest expeditions, Noel had a number of immediate challenges to overcome. His attempt to develop and process film in the field in 1922 had encountered extreme difficulties. Dust and sand ruined emulsions. Water and even chemical developers froze overnight. The air inside his lightproof tent became toxic to breathe. For 1924 he decided to concentrate all the work in Darjeeling. Using funds from his investors, he bought a piece of land and ordered the construction of a photographic laboratory, fully equipped with developing trays, chemical supplies, and an electric generator for power. To run the lab Noel hired a local photographer, Arthur Pereira, who with one assistant would work seven days a week for four months. The film itself would travel to Darjeeling in relays of porters and horsemen, carried in air- and watertight containers, which had been custom-built in London. Altogether Noel had 14 cameras, including one pocket-sized model, designed to carry just two minutes of film, for the men to take on the summit attempt.

Noel's technical innovations were startling. Obligated to

use black and white film, he recorded the colours of every still photograph with reference to a standard chart, so that once converted to glass negatives the images could be accurately tinted by hand. His film cameras had special features that mitigated the effect of static electricity, and electric motors that allowed both time-lapse and slow-motion exposures, both novelties at the time. Clipped to his camera was a six-power telescope, which was synchronised with the optimal axis of the lens, such that the image in the telescope was in the aperture of the lens. With a 20-inch telephoto lens he would capture still images at 3,000 yards – the farthest so far achieved. From a perch above Camp III, at an altitude of about 22,000 feet [6,700m], he would be able to film the ascents from a distance of three miles [4.8km], with almost perfect clarity. To transport his cameras, he bought mules, and had saddles specially designed. With two trained porters to help, he found that with practice he could have his camera out of its box and mounted on a tripod in 30 seconds or less. The footage that eventually found its way back to Pathé News and to theatres all over Britain would be of a quality rarely before seen in newsreels.

NOEL'S LOUSE PARTY

The death of Mallory and Irvine did not imply an end to the British dream of Everest, but it shook a war-stained nation, leading many to wonder if and when climbers might ever return to the mountain. The great hope of the Everest Committee, the antidote to grief and national mourning, was commercial success for Noel's second film, *The Epic of Everest*, which was scheduled to debut at the New Scala Theatre in London on 8 December 1924, three months after the return of the ill-fated expedition.

Since the inception of Explorer Films, incorporated on Christmas Eve 1923, John Noel had been running on nerves. From an initial offering of just 200 shares at £1 each, the company had grown dramatically, fuelled by the promise of the third expedition; by February 1924 Noel's stake alone consisted of 350 Preferred and 5142 Deferred Shares. His goal, as he wrote to General Bruce, was to produce a film that could compete head to head with any movie "in the cinematograph trade", meaning any dramatic feature coming out of Hollywood. It was a bold ambition. In 1924 he and his investors had put up £8,000, a small fortune. Much could go wrong. Noel fretted about Howard Somervell's score for the new film, the absence of footage from the higher camps, even the lack of a female star. He considered making two new films, a climbing saga of Everest and a grand travelogue of exotic Tibet. These very different themes morphed into one, somewhat awkwardly, and the pressure mounted. As

The Weekly Dispatch identified the mountain itself as the 'leading lady', with the film being the story of 'man's passionate struggle to conquer the dreadful virgin of the snows'



Noel acknowledged from the start, only something on a scale previously unimagined in the documentary field would “obtain a large enough scope to repay the cost of producing the film. Success will depend virtually on whether the mountain is conquered.”

The fate of Mallory and Irvine forced Noel to reconfigure the film from heroic triumph to sublime tragedy. As if to distract the audience from the expedition's ultimate failure, he set out to create a total theatrical experience. Hiring a noted set designer, he transformed the stage of the New Scala theatre into a Tibetan courtyard, with painted backdrops of Himalayan peaks illuminated in the haunting halfshimmer of dusk. As the picture began, the lights would fade, temple doors open and the curtain rise to reveal the flickering drama of another world. For an added touch of authenticity, Noel arranged for a British agent to bring from Gyantse seven Tibetan monks, along with full ritual regalia; cymbals, copper horns, hand bells and swords, trumpets made from thighbones, and drums crafted from human skulls. The monks, according to Noel's plans, would tour with the film, performing before every screening an overture of religious music and dances, setting the mood, as he put it, with “large doses of local colour”.

The arrival of the “seven lamas” from India prompted newspaper coverage not likely to please Tibetan authorities. Among the headlines in the *Daily Sketch*: “High Dignitaries of Tibetan Church Reach London; Bishop to Dance on Stage; Music from Skulls”. On the film's opening night, a dreary Monday, a fogbank swept the length of Tottenham and Charlotte Streets, seeping into the theatre and disrupting the debut. Returning to their flat following the premiere John Noel and his wife Sybil rather inauspiciously came within 15 minutes of dying from a gas leak in their kitchen.

Their fortunes improved in the coming days as positive reviews rolled in, not only in *Kinematograph Weekly* and *Bioscope*, the industry rags of record, but in all the daily papers. Noel's concern about the lack of a female love interest proved unwarranted. The *Weekly Dispatch* identified the mountain itself as the “leading lady”, with the film being the story of “man's passionate struggle to conquer the dreadful virgin of the snows”. In time *The Epic of Everest* would tour Britain, Germany and crisscross North America seven times; in Canada and the United States alone more than a million would see it. Noel's financial gamble paid off, at least in the short term, but the very success of the film doomed any hope for an immediate return to Everest.

Inevitably the production came to the attention of the Tibetan government, which lodged an official diplo-

matic protest. Ostensibly the offences were cultural and religious. Aristocratic Lhasa did not take kindly to scenes of local men and women delousing their children and eating the lice. That seven monks had travelled abroad without permission of their abbot, only to perform rituals on stage like some carnival show, provoked outrage, especially among the conservative monastic factions then ascendant in the Tibetan capital. Noel promoted his film as if it had emerged from a quaint and timeless void. In truth, Lhasa in 1924 teetered on the brink of revolution, with the fate of the nation in the balance. The 13th Dalai Lama was a moderniser, at odds with the monastic orders; tensions ran high in Lhasa, and there was even talk of overthrowing the Dalai Lama. Britain was keen to promote a more modern Tibet as a foil to the aspirations of both China and Soviet Russia, and in the summer of 1924 was actively promoting an uprising against the traditionalists. Nothing came of it, but a pronounced chill fell over diplomatic relations between Tibet and the Raj.

With the Dalai Lama and liberal factions in the army already on the defensive, Noel's film could not have come at a worse time. The Maharaja of Sikkim found the scenes of Tibetans eating lice so insulting that he banned John Noel from his kingdom. The Dalai Lama himself considered the entire extravaganza an affront to the Buddhist religion and called for the immediate arrest of the seven Gyantse monks who had gone abroad. The prime minister of Tibet sent a formal note to the British political officer in Sikkim demanding their immediate return; he ended his reprimand with the words the Everest Committee hoped never to read: “For the future, we cannot give permission to go to Tibet.”

There would be no return to Everest in 1925. Within a year Explorer Films would be out of business. When in 1926 the Everest Committee again sought permission to mount an expedition, British diplomats did not even forward the request to Tibetan authorities. What became known as the “Affair of the Dancing Lamas” had lasting political consequences, reinforcing the traditionalists and undercutting the reforms of the 13th Dalai Lama — reforms that no doubt would have placed Tibet in a much stronger position to cope politically and militarily with the Chinese invasion of 1950, which led to the death of an independent nation. This outcome, impossible to envision or anticipate in 1924, was unfortunately the most lasting and disturbing legacy of John Noel's film, a work that nevertheless remains an early masterpiece of the documentary genre.



The Epic of Everest is showing at the BFI London Film Festival, and is released nationally on 18 October

HIGH LAMAS

Above, left to right: Tibetans with a prayer wheel; some of the expedition's sherpas; and the start of the trek

THE HISTORY MAN

Lav Diaz's determination to explore the darkest aspect of his homeland's past, and to give his stories as long as they need, is almost legendary. In 'Norte, the End of History', he gazes at Ferdinand Marcos's legacy in the Philippines through a Dostoevskian lens

By Aaron Cutler



“Maturation. Growth,” says the Filipino filmmaker Lav Diaz. “These are very broad and relative conditions. Is there really a maximal development in aesthetics? Can wisdom, as measured by age and knowledge and maybe ripening, be really applied to aestheticism? I’m debating with myself.”

Here Diaz is addressing his process of artistic development on the occasion of a screening of his latest completed feature film, *Norte, the End of History* (2013). *Norte* continues Diaz’s career-long interest in enacting personal struggles through exploration of his country’s complicated past. In the film he set out to explore “the birth of fascism in the Philippines” by way of a treatise on the inherent conflict between “the nature of evil and man’s inherent goodness”.

Representing the first is the charismatic, disillusioned former law student Fabian (played by Sid Lucero), who opens *Norte* by talking about “21st-century politics” with friends seated in a café. Fabian calls for “the destruction of the myth of provenance. Of origins,” and a few scenes

later argues that Filipino culture is built upon lies about unity: after all, he says, the first Filipino president, Emilio Aguinaldo, murdered the heroes of the Philippine Revolution, and even today no one will acknowledge it. He believes that all of his society’s rotten elements should be discarded for the sake of starting over, and is willing to murder the local pawnbroker Magda (played by Mae Paner) and her teenage daughter in order to make his point.

The film does not simply follow Fabian in pursuit of his new morality, however. Diaz offers a counterpoint to the ideological struggles of the bourgeois sociopath with the material struggles of Joaquin (played by Archie Alemania), a poor man with a broken leg who is selling pirate DVDs to support his wife Eliza (Diaz regular Angeli Bayani) and two children. Among the people to whom Joaquin is in debt is the pawnbroker Fabian kills. Joaquin is subsequently charged with her death; his indifferent lawyer convinces him to plead guilty, and he receives a life sentence.

Norte, the End of History does not stop with evil’s

‘How can this beauty of a place, so majestic, so heavenly, so eternal, produce the biggest monster in Philippine history?’



triumph over good; as it continues, it suggests that all three of the film's protagonists move between both poles. The camera often stands back slightly from a scene, steadily observing a few people as one of them considers how best to behave in relation to his fellows. Joaquin, gratuitously stabbed by a brutal fellow inmate (played by Soliman Cruz), must later decide whether to help or hurt the man when he grows sickly; meanwhile, Eliza sells fruit by day to help the family, and at night tells her children that, though he is in prison, their father is not a criminal. The real murderer, Fabian, often observes her from a distance as she does so. He has moved to live near the family in the wake of the sentence, and is deliberating whether and how he might help.

Norte began with an original script that Diaz liked for its "Raskolnikovian perspective" (Fabian's crime echoes Raskolnikov's in *Crime and Punishment*). But, as per his regular practice, Diaz threw the script away during shooting and awoke each dawn to write new scenes for

"a more truthful pursuit of the film's discourse". In the process, *Norte* moved away from what might have been a straight transposition of the Dostoevsky novel, whose "discourse on guilt" directly inspired Diaz's first completed feature, *The Criminal of Barrio Concepcion* (1998)—the story of a young man seeking forgiveness for his part in a kidnapping. That film already contained what the late Filipino critic Alexis Tioseco argued was Diaz's great theme, increasingly embroidered into the fabric of his country's history: "the crushing weight of guilt on those who seek redemption".

In *Norte*, Diaz chose to explore the theme in the beautiful northernmost region of the Philippines, Ilocos Norte, on whose hillsides Fabian stands in front of glittering water as he condemns his people. This is the native region of the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, whose 15 years of martial law (1972-1986) remain, for Diaz, the Philippines' worst trauma. (The country's current "very responsible" president, Benigno Aquino III, is the son of President Corazon Aquino, who came to power after

POOR FOLK

Top: Lav Diaz in Manila. Above left: Eliza (Angeli Bayani), with her arms around her children and pictured with her sister Ading (Hazel Orenco), in *Norte*, *the End of History*. Above right: Fabian (Sid Lucero), the 'Raskolnikovian' law student of *Norte*

the revolution that removed Marcos from office.) In a piece for *Film Comment* the critic Noel Vera has outlined the clear parallels between Fabian and the young Marcos – himself a law student who reputedly murdered a political rival of his father. Diaz says that as he filmed in the verdant paradise of Marcos's home region, some questions continually gnawed at him: "How can this beauty of a place, so majestic, so heavenly, so eternal, produce the biggest monster in Philippine history? Did this aesthetic destroy our country?"

Diaz has long been wary of the lulling power of aesthetics. The 54-year-old filmmaker is old enough to remember how Marcos's election in 1965 was aided by the popularity of the propagandist feature film *Iginuhit ng Tadhana: The Ferdinand E. Marcos Story*, and has since expressed his belief that the most successful political leaders have known how to exploit cinema as a tool. By contrast, throughout his career Diaz has consciously shunned what he considers the mechanics of popular commercial filmmaking (previously claiming that "It is a mortal sin to take advantage of people's ignorance") in order to focus on making more rigorously clear-eyed, personal work. Diaz, who usually shoots in black and white, made *Norte* his first feature-length film in colour in over decade, in order to take advantage of the fact that Ilocos Norte's "hues are perennially vibrant, always bright, and emphatically burning bright"; still, he adds that "Colour is deceptive."

The posing of unresolved contradictions as part of an ongoing moral struggle is integral to Diaz's filmmaking, in which he typically acts as his own writer, director, producer, cinematographer and editor. (*Norte* was photographed by his close friend Lauro Rene Manda.) "Every work that I do is a battle with understanding cinema, understanding life," he says. "It's all about going back to understand the nature of man and origins." A frequent Diaz shot, in *Norte* as well as in earlier films, begins with a fixed view of a natural landscape – a country road between trees, or a forest clearing – on which the camera will linger for several minutes; it is only gradually, and often imperceptibly, that a small figure will appear in the background, revealing itself to be a human being, accumulating more complex detail as he or she approaches.

Heremias, Book One: Legend of the Lizard Princess (2005, with *Book Two* currently in rough cut form), for example, is structured around such shots, through which the title character, a young man played by Ronnie Lazaro, passes on his way from one human society to another, seeking the one he fits best. Within each new setting he is reborn and reconfigured, until circumstances shake him from it and he must create himself anew. The artistic need to register the full distance travelled spiritually by way of physical journeys is part of the reason that Diaz's narratively dense films often have what are by conventional standards long running times. *Norte* runs a little over four hours; *Heremias* is more than eight.

Since the minute counts can prove daunting to potential Diaz viewers (including, on several occasions, this one), some further accounting for them might be helpful. Diaz – who has also made films lasting three, eight, 30, 45, and 70 minutes – says that he does not think about presenting time for its own sake, but rather that its passing is a consequence of the story he is telling. "I have respect

Diaz, who usually shoots in black and white, made 'Norte' his first feature-length film in colour in over a decade. Still, he adds that 'Colour is deceptive'

for the autonomy of each work," he says, "and because the process is always organic, each work determines its own canvas size."

Within those canvases, an important factor often becomes duration, to which time is subservient. Diaz has characterised time as a European invention, introduced to the Philippines by colonial Spain. The original Malay culture of the Philippines has no sense of minutes and hours, instead measuring life through the duration of events. Part of what Diaz hopes to achieve through making large-canvas works is the truest possible vision of his own cultural origins. His films often search for these through images of separated family members longing for reunion. It matters less that the spectator be able to feel the weight of years passing in *Norte*, the *End of History*, for example, than it does that he or she sense Joaquin and Eliza passing through an extended separation while maintaining their love. Their lasting connection continues an emotional bond between loved ones that has travelled throughout Diaz's films up to now. One of the most striking sequences in his earlier, decades-spanning epic of one family's resistance to the Marcos government, *Evolution of a Filipino Family* (2004), shows rural matriarchs who have previously been thought dead walking a long road back to their children and grandchildren at home.

Even though Diaz has made large-canvas films in Manila, as well as in small towns, his willingness to follow actions in full stems from his own childhood experience, which included walking five kilometres each way to and from school, and spending long periods travelling alongside his parents. Diaz grew up in a Muslim area of the southern island of Mindanao, raised Catholic by school teacher parents – his father would take him into town on weekends to watch eight or so films.

Diaz gave up on the church after witnessing outbreaks of holy war that forced his family to relocate, yet the "pioneering and sacrificing ways" of his parents continued to inspire him. Specifically, he says that he learned from "their responsibility and understanding of the issue of struggle", which helped him through a rocky early adulthood: "I was already raising a family at a very young age – got married at 19, had my first child at 20. I played music in some obscure bands, worked with the





government after college, walked the streets of Manila peddling encyclopedias, became a newspaperman, wrote some short stories, songs, poems, essays, television dramas, and screenplays.” He moved to New York in 1992 with his family, to work for a Filipino newspaper, leaving them there when he returned to the Philippines to arrange their legal relocation four years later.

He won a screenwriting prize and stayed in the Philippines to make cinema, initially directing heavily compromised films for the studio Regal Films before breaking away to devote himself to independent projects. His expatriate experiences, as well as those of the 13 million-strong Filipino diaspora, are reflected in his first independent film, *Batang West Side* (2001), which was shot primarily back in New York. The film presents a Filipino police officer (a haunted Joel Torre) investigating the murder of a young man in the Filipino community in Jersey City – for which the film eventually suggests that the entire community is responsible.

“Culture imposes perception,” says Diaz, who now divides his time between his family in New York and making films in the Philippines. He has referred to the Filipino condition – despite its close-knit communities – as one of permanent displacement and ongoing self-estrangement. This makes sense in light of the history of the Philippines: a disparate archipelago of 7,100 islands that has successively suffered 300 years of Spanish dominion, occupation by the United States (beginning with a war that likely caused more than a million unrecorded civilian deaths), and the reign of a brutal native dictator.

The history points to what Diaz sees as a troubling tendency in Filipino culture to welcome oppressors with open arms. This is overtly enacted in *Norte, the End of History* through a late visit by Fabian to his wealthy and devoutly Christian sister Hoda (Miles Canapi). Attached to the notion of family, she is thrilled to see him and seemingly blind to the possibility of evil in him. Fabian exploits her and is increasingly angered by her gentleness, until he takes it upon himself to show her what evil looks like. A tendency to accept fate is displayed less blatantly by Joaquin and Eliza, who cling to a fundamental faith in their society, regardless of how it treats them.

The film looks at Fabian’s often passive victims and struggles towards an understanding not just of Marcos, but of those who supported him. “Responsibility is the moral position of my works,” Diaz says: the filmmaker is consistently driven to depict victims who become their

own victimisers. His films ask the Dostoevskian question – sometimes out loud, as observers of violence and abuse do in works like *Florentina Hubaldo*, *CTE* (2012) – of why evil exists; they go on to wonder why innocent people so freely tolerate it.

Often, the films do not answer these questions, and perhaps they cannot. Diaz has never closed a film with a death, nor have any of his independent features ended on a clear triumphant note. His characters’ problems, rather, remain unresolved. Diaz says that he directly identifies with many of his characters, including Eliza, Joaquin, and Fabian, none of whom, by the end of *Norte*, have clearly won or lost: “The battle continues,” Diaz says. “We grapple and struggle with our being every day.”

Diaz is extending his struggle into more films – he is working on at least four. (“I’m bursting and exploding,” he says. “But then I must practise restraint, discipline, and zen for things not to turn into disarray.”) He sympathises with Fabian’s condemnation of a historically forgetful culture, “so petrified in denial and apathy”, and is responding to the problem by moving back through history. Diaz is planning to visit the immediate aftermath of the Philippine Revolution. Like many other countries who suffered under dictatorships, the Philippines has a legacy of “disappeared” people – those deemed political enemies by the ruling powers. This legacy extends back to the nation’s inception.

Diaz’s new black-and-white short film *Prologue to the Great Desaparecido* (2013, and intended, as its title suggests, to become part of a much longer feature) focuses on Gregoria de Jesús (played by Hazel Orencio), widow of Andrés Bonifacio, hero of the Philippine Revolution who was betrayed and killed by Emilio Aguinaldo. The film consists primarily of views of Gregoria wandering through the woods during her 30-day search for her husband’s missing body, which Diaz considers “one great metaphor for the Filipino search for truth – we can’t seem to find it.” But the search continues, none the less. At one point the film presents a flashback to her late husband (Archie Alemania), sitting at his desk writing her a letter. As he writes we hear his words: “Please don’t stop trusting. May you not lose hope. We will find a cure, in time, to this catastrophe.”

For Nika Bohinc and Alexis Tioseco, who wrote about and produced Lav Diaz’s work.

LFF *Norte, the End of History* is being shown in the BFI London Film Festival

THE HOURS

Bottom left: *Century of Birthing* (2011), 360 minutes. Above left, *Death in the Land of Encantos* (2007), 540 minutes. Above right, *Florentina Hubaldo*, *CTE* (2012), 300 minutes

THE PEAK OF SILENT CINEMA

After decades of neglect and condescension, contemporary filmmakers, critics and audiences are learning to appreciate the marvels of silent film, and how much more it was than talkies minus the words. During the highpoint of the silent era, between 1926 and 1930, the form reached a zenith of poetic expression and subtlety before the coming of sound swept it all away. Here we present a personal selection of 15 key films from that period. **By Ian Christie**



Something remarkable happened when *Sight & Sound* held its ten-yearly poll of critics and filmmakers around the world last year. It wasn't just that Hitchcock finally took the lead, but that three silent films appeared in the top ten – with another at number 11, and two more in the top 50: a total of six films, all from the period between 1926 and 1931, when cinema faced its first major revolution. In fact, five came from the peak years 1926–29, with Chaplin's 1931 *City Lights* an outlier, from the one filmmaker who was independent and stubborn enough to resist the march of the Talkies. So what was so special about silents?

It was of course the talkies, as the first synchronised films were popularly known, that made earlier films 'silent' – just as colour would make others 'black and white'. Ironically, we know more about those who hated the tinny sound of the first talkies than we do about the mass of ordinary cinemagoers who accepted them, perhaps with misgivings. With their encouragement, first Warners – who had broken the sound barrier with *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 – and soon every production company around the world invested in sound technology and started learning a new language.

But was there a special 'language of silents' – one that enough present-day connoisseurs have managed to relearn to reinstate the silents among cinema's classics, and to make festivals like Pordenone and Bologna successful? In the 'teens, when the long film of 90 minutes or more became established as cinema's equivalent of a play or a novel, D. W. Griffith told an actress never to speak disrespectfully about "the flickers", because she was "working in the universal language that was predicted in the Bible, which was to make all men brothers, and could end wars and bring about the millennium".

Even if few would have put it quite so fervently, the reality was that silent-era films could and did reach global audiences, with their intertitles easily translated into local languages. Characters could be renamed to suit local tastes, especially in comedies, and storylines could skip across decades, or even millennia, with a well-chosen phrase – 'After many years...'. But above all, this was *visual* story-telling, with characters acting out dramas that their vast audiences could identify

with in a new and often intensely emotional way. And with all this outpouring of identification, the actors became stars of a new magnitude, far beyond the fame of earlier stage legends.

The emotional bond between filmgoers and their idols became shockingly clear when some of the early stars died prematurely. Vera Kholodnaya, Russia's first great star, was only 25 when she died in 1919, but her funeral in Odessa attracted thousands of mourners. Even more spectacularly, the death of Rudolph Valentino in 1926 drew vast crowds in New York and across America, with reports of suicides among distraught admirers. Such public displays, together with accounts of obsessive fascination among fans and how the major studios worked to encourage this, tells us something about how audiences related to films in the 1920s which is very different from detached critical judgement about who were the 'greatest' actors and directors.

I'm particularly struck by one account of what it was like to be part of a silent-era audience, which appeared in the 1964 autobiography of Jean-Paul Sartre [*Words/Les mots*]. Attending the boulevard cinemas with his beloved young mother, Sartre "loved the cinema for its two-dimensional quality... making primary colours of its black and white. Above all, I loved the immutable dumbness of my heroes: but they were not mute because they knew how to make

themselves understood. We communicated through music; it was the sound of what was going on inside them." In just one eloquent page, Sartre evokes the intensity and the intimacy of the spectator's relationship to a screen that didn't speak, but where audible music – often popular classics pressed into service by accompanists – and a unique visual music put him fleetingly "in touch with the absolute".

No doubt the Saturday night customers at the local Palais or Essoldo would have put it differently – but the fact that few ever recorded their feelings about this new mass phenomenon shouldn't blind us to the extraordinarily democratic and emotional appeal of the silents at their peak. Royalty and politicians were as much in thrall to the giants of the silent screen as shop-assistants and mechanics. Maybe Griffith was right about the 'universal language'.

And did it all change with the talkies? Opinion has been divided on this ever since the early 1930s, when the die was clearly cast. And every history of cinema published since has offered some kind of verdict. There is no simple answer, because the experience was so varied across generations, continents and professions. And nor was it an overnight transition. There had been synchronised speech and music in film shows since the early 1900s, much more widely than film history has acknowledged, and often billed as a special climax to the programme. But the all-sound film, with a continuous recorded track, was a gamble in 1927. And even after the worldwide impact of *The Jazz Singer*, experienced in major cities around the world across three years after its New York premiere on 27 October 1927, silent films would continue to be produced until as late as 1934 in a number of countries, with many productions during 1927–29 issued in two versions, or with only synchronised portions, as in Paul Fejos's *Lonesome*.

One way of assessing response to the transition is to compare two comments by the same highly opinionated critic: one dated March 1930 and the other July 1931. In *The Film Till Now*, Paul Rotha wrote of "the cacophonous presence of the dialogue film" that "as a mechanical invention it is marvellous", but "all dialogue films are simply reductions to absurdity of the



Somehow it worked: Gance's *Napoleon*



Beware the devil woman: Margaret Livingston as the Woman from the City, tempting George O'Brien in *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*

attempt to join two separate arts.” A year later, in *Celluloid: The Film Today*, he wrote: “However much we may deplore the coming of the dialogue cinema... we must admit that it had one great merit inasmuch as fresh ideas and new personalities found their way into the studios. It was as if a stimulating wind blew through the exhausted, leaden atmosphere of the film factories.” In the second book, Rotha admits that “the silent cinema was losing its public” during the year before the talkies arrived, blaming this on “the monotony of the star system” and “the standardization of product”.

Even among experimental filmmakers, not (yet) faced with commercial considerations, there were signs in the late 20s of a growing desire to bring sound into the expressive apparatus of cinema, while not wanting it to be used merely to ‘photograph plays’. Amid all the over-familiar anecdotes about actors whose careers were destroyed by sound and cameras that could no longer move due to cumbersome sound-blimping, there remains the obvious fact that the conversion to sound was massively expensive, yet was felt sufficiently worthwhile for producers and exhibitors to undertake it, in order to “bolster up”, as Rotha put it, the somewhat faded appeal of cinema. There were undoubtedly serious losses, not only of careers and livelihoods, but also of film itself, with a terrifying proportion of all silent films simply junked on the assumption that they would be of little future interest.

But what else was lost? In the decade after the mid-teens, when Griffith and DeMille created films which convinced many doubters that cinema had finally revealed its potential as a ‘seventh art’, a number of theories emerged about just what this new art consisted of. For some, it was a new form of narrative, freed from the confines of page, stage or painting, able to manipulate bodies in natural and constructed spaces with a freedom previously unimagined. Invocations of Shakespeare, Dickens and other great storytellers became common, as enthusiasts insisted they would all have wanted to make movies. But for others, the new art had to be distinct; to have its own medium-specific techniques. The earliest of these to be championed were cutting and the close-up; and the canonisation of Griffith owed much to his spectacular use of ‘parallel editing’ in *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*. But when the new Soviet filmmakers burst on the scene in the mid-20s, cutting took on a new significance. Now often called ‘montage’, it meant cutting increasingly fast between very different images, to create what Russian theorists believed was a physiological, potentially unconscious response to the image-stream.

Whatever the impact of the Soviets, spearheaded by Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* – which was dissected more eagerly in Berlin and Los Angeles than in Moscow – there were other ideas in play about the specificity of film. From the French avant garde, especially in the writings of Jean Epstein, came an exploration of the power of the close-up, which it was argued brought viewers into a new relationship with the human face and with objects. And during the 20s, German cinema moved beyond its stylised décor to make



I don't want to live with monkeys: Chaplin's *Circus*

increasing use of camera movement, which reached a thrilling climax in two widely admired and imitated films, Murnau’s *The Last Laugh* and Dupont’s *Varieté* (1925), both shot by Karl Freund.

Hollywood would assimilate all of these favoured qualities in its own way, prizing camera movement, close-ups, subtly stylised décor and dramatic light-painting, with a discreet use of rapid montage, especially in bridging sequences. It also developed a style of acting that combined naturalistic detail with a kind of abstraction that created recognisable ‘types’. All are apparent in such highly praised films as *The Crowd*, *7th Heaven* and *Sunrise*, which marked what was to prove the climax of ‘silent style’. However, Europe could go even further towards realising cinema’s full potential as a silent art, notably in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, with settings all but suppressed in favour of an unbroken series of close-ups, rhythmically edited into a stylised reality, as powerful as any painting or sculpture. Here, for many who lamented the breaking of cinema’s silence, was perfection.

The 1960s and 70s saw the beginnings of scattered efforts to collect and preserve what remained from the silent era, often owing as much to the passions of collectors as to established archives. In 1980, Kevin Brownlow and David Gill’s *Hollywood* series on Thames Television offered a substantial history of the silent-era industry, including interviews with many of its surviving personalities, and clips from a wide range of virtually unknown films. In 1981, Brownlow’s reconstruction of Abel Gance’s *Napoleon* was premiered with a new orchestral score from Carl Davis, and proved a

surprise hit, leading to a continuing series of full dress-presentations, with original scores, such as Shostakovich’s for Kozintsev and Trauberg’s *New Babylon*, and newly commissioned music by contemporary composers and musicians. Strange to relate, much silent film had previously been shown in complete silence in classrooms and archival cinemas, although a tradition of improvised piano accompaniment had also persisted – mostly far inferior to the virtuosity and imagination of today’s accompanists. In 1982, the Pordenone Giornate del cinema muto, or ‘silent film festival’, started as an amateur showing of American silent film to entertain the victims of a local earthquake – and has survived to become the Mecca of silent film discovery and enjoyment.

As someone who has lived through (and contributed to) this recent history, it’s obvious to me that there has been a subtle yet massive shift in sensibility. Many doubted that Gance’s *Napoleon* would be a rewarding, or even bearable, experience; yet the overwhelming verdict was that it had been revelatory. One distinguished archivist said afterwards: “It shouldn’t have worked, but somehow it did.” The experience of silent film has somehow been recovered, overcoming decades of neglect and condescension, to the point where an evening, or even a festival, of ‘live cinema’ is an attractive proposition for increasing numbers of enthusiasts, and where new DVD editions of the silent-era repertoire continue to appear.

But how to find our way around the silents, now that their riches are becoming available again? After some agonising, I hope the following 15 key works convey the essence of cinema in the peak years immediately before synchronised sound. Hollywood has to contribute the lion’s share, although half of these choices were created by recent immigrants, and I’ve tried to strike a balance between acknowledged classics and lesser-known discoveries. But the choice has to be, ultimately, a personal one.

The experience of silent film has somehow been recovered, overcoming decades of neglect and condescension

1 The Circus Charles Chaplin, 1928
Why choose the one film its maker didn't even mention in his autobiography? Chaplin had enjoyed immense success with *The Gold Rush* in 1925, confounding expectations by sending his Little Tramp to the frozen North, and creating some of his most famous sight gags (the dance of the bread rolls). Deciding on his next subject had become an increasingly agonising business, but a circus setting must have seemed obvious, with endless opportunities for pantomime business, and a potentially thrilling climax, as Charlie struggles to complete a tightrope walk while being attacked by monkeys. Sure enough, the high-wire performance is genuinely suspenseful, in the vein of Harold Lloyd's aerial feats, and all the more so when we realise that Chaplin and his handsome rival in love, Harry Crocker, really did learn rope-walking to do it. And according to his biographer David Robinson, the scenes with lions were just as dangerous as they look.

None of this would make the film any better than Chaplin's more famous early shorts, or his protest against the encroaching talkies, the elaborately and defiantly silent *City Lights* (1931), if it weren't for the near-perfect balance between sentiment and superbly honed physical comedy. *The Circus* allows Charlie to be himself, revelling in the *commedia dell'arte* character he had created, of the little man who has to battle against all odds to win the girl. There's also an intriguing hint of self-examination, since he's taken on by the circus to be a clown, but finds he can't do the business unless he's in dead trouble.

The Circus reminded Chaplin painfully of the many calamities that befell the production, ranging from his disastrous emergency marriage to Lita Grey to the studio burning down, and it was all but forgotten



Another fine etc: Laurel and Hardy annoy James Finlayson in *Big Business*

until he re-released it in 1969, with his own specially composed (and sung!) score – an incomparable one-man show, and probably the most perfect expression of Chaplin's art.

2 Big Business James Horne, Leo McCarey, 1929
Laurel and Hardy are the odd couple of film history. Lacking the high-culture admirers of Chaplin or Keaton, their case rests on the simple test of whether you find them funny. If you don't, then this late silent slapstick orgy, incongruously set in a sunlit suburban street of Culver City, is

unlikely to impress. But if you do, then it may rate as the most hysterical 20-minute crescendo in the history of cinema – the prototype of every later attempt to orchestrate total destruction.

To some extent, *Big Business* is an arbitrary choice from among the dozens of shorts that Laurel and Hardy made during the last two years of the silent era, from 1927-29 – the apocalyptic pie-fight of *The Battle of the Century*, or the skyscraper antics of *Liberty* are equally great – but it illustrates perfectly what made their comedy unique. Always rooted in the everyday, and semi-improvised, usually from an idea by Stan Laurel – who shared the same English music hall training as Chaplin and co-wrote and directed most of their work – their films are logically constructed, with a slow-burn tempo that allows us to savour the inevitable. In this case, trying to sell a Christmas tree to the irascible James Finlayson, another member of Hal Roach's Comedy All-Stars stable, leads to mounting mutually assured devastation.

Unlike their great contemporary, Buster Keaton, Stan and Ollie had little trouble transitioning to sound. Nor did their directorial mentor, Leo McCarey, who had learned his craft with some of the other now unfairly neglected 20s comedians, notably Charley Chase and Max Davidson. Together they would continue creating delirious variations on the oldest of gags and playing endless variations on their well-established characters: Ollie bullying and impetuous, and Stan childlike, often appealing directly to camera, as if pleading for audience sympathy, and occasionally dissolving in tears. Compared with Chaplin or Keaton, there's a bumbling humanity here.

3 7th Heaven Frank Borzage, 1927
Based on a schmaltzy Broadway hit, written by the step-grandson of Robert Louis Stevenson, this is high Hollywood melodrama that's almost guaranteed to reduce



A swoonful of sugar: Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell in Borzage's *7th Heaven*

any audience to joyous tears. A young Parisian sewer worker saves the waif-like Diane from her drink-crazed sister, and shelters her in his picturesque *La bohème*-style garret, overlooking a Montmartre lovingly created in the Fox Studios. The Great War eventually separates the pair, but they have already “climbed to happiness through faith, hope and courage”, as *Photoplay* put it, announcing that the film had won its eighth medal of honour, as well as three of the first Oscars.

The film launched an unknown Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell on an 11-film partnership that made them Hollywood's biggest attraction during the transition to talkies, and it also inaugurated Borzage's run of successes. The performances of Gaynor and Farrell are certainly still touchingly sincere, but the sets by Harry Oliver also play an important part in creating the film's almost palpable sense of love triumphant, with Ernest Palmer's camera performing marvels, as the same pair would continue to do in Borzage's subsequent *Street Angel* (1928) and *The River* (1929), both made as part-synchronised films. Not everyone admired the film initially – the British critic Paul Rotha dismissed it as “eyewash” – but both French and Japanese critics and filmmakers responded passionately (a poster appears in Ozu's *Days of Youth*). Borzage's star has risen with restorations and retrospectives since the 1990s, and his late silents now seem little short of miraculous. As Kent Jones wrote: “*7th Heaven* represents the most dramatic instance in Borzage's work of the collapse of time outside of the space created by love. Within Chico's apartment ‘near the stars’, time is elongated and becalmed, allowing the smallest reverberation in Diane's heart to register as her joyful certainty and the space around her unite.”

4 *Sunrise* F. W. Murnau, 1927

No sooner had the German film industry made its spectacular post-war recovery than it began to hemorrhage talent to the Hollywood studio bosses competing for big names. None was bigger than Murnau after the success of two films in very different genres, *The Last Laugh* (1924) and *Faust* (1926), and William Fox gave him carte blanche to create this elemental fable of temptation leading to redemption. Only in silent cinema could there be ‘The Man’ and ‘The Woman’, living in a fishing village near A City. Janet Gaynor played her second innocent of the same year (alongside *7th Heaven*), partnered this time by George O'Brien, as the husband who thinks better of his murderous plan. But more than with almost any other film, it's the composition and movement of *Sunrise* that grip us as we follow the pair from a rural paradise, via a magical trolley-car ride, to the City, where they're reconciled amid its impersonal bustle.

The vast exterior set that Murnau's art department built became almost as famous as Griffith's Babylon for *Intolerance* a decade earlier, and was adapted for several other Fox films; but unlike *Metropolis*, it never becomes the focus of attention. This remains fixed on the archetypal couple and their experiences, recalling the contrasting vignettes of high and low life in *The Last Laugh*. Both films were written by Carl



Victory lap: Louise Brooks conquers Fritz Kortner in *Pandora's Box*

Brooks projects an extraordinary carnal innocence, which radiates amid the melodramatic trappings of her descent

Mayer, the unsung genius of Weimar cinema, who had launched its success with *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919) and believed passionately in film as visual storytelling, with few or ideally no titles to break the spell. If *Sunrise* still moves us, in a version that's survived with its original orchestral score by Hugo Reisenfeld, it's surely due to Mayer's vision being so faithfully realised by all concerned. Four years later, Murnau was dead and Mayer died impoverished in wartime London, but *Sunrise* still radiates its magic.

5 *The Wind* Victor Sjöström/Seastrom, 1928

Sjöström became ‘Seastrom’ when he joined Metro in 1924, going on to become one of their leading directors during the late 20s. His Hollywood career reached a climax in *The Wind*. Shot partly on location in the Mojave Desert, this study of isolation on the bleak Western prairies reunited Sjöström with the already legendary Lillian Gish, star of Griffith's greatest work, and the Swedish actor Lars Hanson, after the pair had triumphed in *The*

Scarlet Letter (1926), a challenging story about America's Puritan past. *The Wind* would take the same team, including MGM's star scenarist Frances Marion, even further away from comforting entertainment, as Gish battles hostile relatives and an even more hostile climate.

Sjöström had been a pioneer filmmaker in Sweden, directing and acting in credible features from as early as 1913. But it was his adaptations of the Nobel prizewinning Selma Lagerlöf in the late 'teens, together with the sophisticated comedies of Mauritz Stiller (the discoverer of Garbo and also a short-lived Hollywood recruit), that made Swedish cinema an early force to be reckoned with. Sjöström's themes of physical and psychological isolation and of moral scapegoating – as recently seen at Bologna in a restoration of his magnificent *The Outlaw and his Wife* (1917) – carry over into his best work in Hollywood. It was Gish who stood firm against attempts to soften the harsh morality of *The Scarlet Letter*, and she would similarly bear the brunt, in every sense, of *The Wind*. When she and Sjöström were forced to give it a happy ending, their careers at MGM were over.

The film's modern reputation owes much to one of Carl Davis's most effective accompaniments, premiered in 1983 and scored only for strings and a large percussion ensemble, viscerally intensifying the sandstorm that all but engulfs the fragile Gish.



Reunited: O'Brien and Janet Gaynor in *Sunrise*

6 The Crowd King Vidor, 1926
The young King Vidor had scored an immense success with *The Big Parade* (1925), a fictional account of a 'down-to-earth American doughboy' experiencing the Great War, which played for two years in New York, making a fortune for MGM and establishing both Vidor and its star, John Gilbert. This gave him the leeway to attempt an experimental approach to a similar theme: the drama of a truly ordinary life. Given the go-ahead by the 'boy wonder' Irving Thalberg, he cast unknowns in the lead parts and shot clandestinely on the streets of New York, tracing the life of Johnny Sims from his birth on July 4 1900 to the then present. An untalented man who believes he can 'beat the crowd' instead remains just part of it, along with his bickering family, until all seems lost.

Despite some stunning sequences – tracking up a skyscraper to reveal Sims (James Murray) at work in a sea of identical desks; visits to Niagara Falls and Coney Island – the film is restrained, even realistic, in portraying everyday American life (including what is reputedly the first screen toilet). Vidor apparently shot nine alternative endings, and if the one finally chosen seems something of a cop-out, it's truer to his original vision than studio boss Louis B Mayer's rose-tinted alternative. 1928 also saw the Hungarian Paul Fejös's *Lonesome*, showing isolated New Yorkers sharing an unexpected day of romance, and a group of European expats in Los Angeles making *The Life and Death of a Hollywood Extra* as a satire on the industry's contempt for its anonymous workforce. The Wall Street Crash of the following year would make these fanfares for the common man seem prophetic; and Vidor would pick up the theme again in *Our Daily Bread* (1934).

7 Pandora's Box G.W. Pabst, 1929
Ever since Louise Brooks emerged from shadowy retirement to reveal herself as a witty and self-aware memoirist in the late 1970s, there has been persistent conflation of the amoral role she plays in *Pandora's Box* and her own racy life. After three years of minor parts in Hollywood, two 1928 appearances, in Hawks's *A Girl in Every Port* and Wellman's *Beggars of Life*, led to her breaking a studio contract and heading for Europe, arriving in Berlin just in time to snatch the part of Lulu from Marlene Dietrich (yet to make her breakthrough in *The Blue Angel*). Pabst had already established a reputation for sexual frankness in his *The Joyless Street* (1925) and a film 'explaining' psychoanalysis, *Secrets*



Prairie flower: Lillian Gish in *The Wind*

of a Soul (1926). Now he turned to the second of Wedekind's notorious 'Lulu' plays, dating from the turn of the century but still potent in their attack on bourgeois hypocrisy (Asta Nielsen had played her in a film of the first, *Erdegeist*, in 1923).

Brooks was an inspired choice, with her burnished flapper's bob, projecting an extraordinary carnal innocence which radiates amid the melodramatic trappings of her descent from haute bourgeois luxury to a self-sacrificing, seedily romantic end in the imagined Whitechapel stalked by Jack the Ripper. But Pabst's expressionism was already giving way to a more documentary style, which would colour his second collaboration with Brooks, the equally fascinating, though underrated, *Diary of a Lost Girl* (1929). As Pabst's sound films struck out in new directions, from the pacifism of *Westfront 1918* and *Kameradschaft* to his controversial adaptation of Brecht and Weill's *Threepenny Opera*, Brooks's career nosedived into obscurity – until her memoir *Lulu in Hollywood* helped revive the decadent allure of Weimar Berlin and its fleshpots, guaranteeing *Pandora's Box* a permanent place in its folklore.

8 Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis
Walter Ruttmann, 1929
German cinema was beginning to emerge from its expressionist dream when *Berlin* boldly struck out in a new direction, more in tune with the



Unheimlich: *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis*

prevailing artistic climate of 'new objectivity' and looking forward to the coming decade when documentary would gain status. Starting with a dynamic sequence of a train speeding into Berlin, the film chronicles a day in the life of the city, from the first figures appearing in the early morning streets, through the bustle of a working day punctuated by personal dramas, and into the hectic neon-lit nightlife for which Berlin was famous. Shooting with concealed cameras was combined with carefully staged incidents to convey the tempo and diversity of modern city life. Soon there would be imitations – in Moscow, Dziga Vertov felt cheated that a film of city reality had anticipated his plans, but persevered to make his own, more complex *Man with a Movie Camera* in 1929; and Alberto Cavalcanti's more modest account of life in Paris, *Rien que les heures*, was largely overshadowed by *Berlin* – while the genre would become known as the 'city symphony', no doubt in recognition of its pioneer.

Although it became a documentary benchmark, the film's origins were actually more diverse. The idea came from the arch-expressionist scenarist Carl Mayer (also responsible for devising the composite fictional cities seen in *The Last Laugh* and *Sunrise*); and the cameraman Karl Freund, almost simultaneously engaged in photographing the futuristic city of Lang's *Metropolis*, produced the film for Fox's European branch. Its director and



Fanfare for the common man: King Vidor's *The Crowd*

editor, Walter Ruttmann, was previously known only for his pioneering abstract animation and commercials, and must have been responsible for its rhythmic aspect, underlined by an original accompanying score commissioned from Edmund Meisel, who had written the live score for the German release of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*.

9 **Earth** Alexander Dovzhenko, 1930
Choosing among the clutch of masterpieces that Soviet cinema unleashed in the last years of the silent era is impossible, but the filmmakers most in danger of being neglected are probably Pudovkin and Dovzhenko, and the latter's final silent belongs in a category all its own. Ostensibly part of the propaganda drive to promote mechanised collectivisation that also produced Eisenstein's highly experimental *The Old and the New*, it's actually an intensely lyrical poem about – well... life and death, nature and the machine, above all the fertile earth of Dovzhenko's beloved Ukraine. If this makes it sound pretentious, nothing could be more concrete, almost physical in the impact of its images. Hung on a slender thread of narrative that sees the young people of the village welcome the first tractor, while the rich farmers plot to murder the peasants' leader, Dovzhenko wove a tapestry of ravishing images, which run the full gamut from an old man's serene acceptance of death in the opening sequence, to a naked frenzy of despair by the murdered man's fiancée that had Soviet censors reaching for their scissors. Meanwhile the British censor primly cut a birth scene that's intertwined with the young man's funeral, crudely upsetting the film's rich dialectic.

Stalin and his henchmen were right to mistrust Dovzhenko, since his films are all more poetic than reliably propagandist; and the delayed coming of sound to Soviet cinema allowed him to make this last great sensuous, ecstatic work



Armchair theatre: the high-spirited farce of René Clair's *An Italian Straw Hat*

while the rest of the world was grappling with recording. There were other late bonuses, like Preobrazhenskaya's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Ermiler's *Fragment of an Empire* and Kozintsev and Trauberg's *New Babylon*, to set alongside the canonic Soviet classics by Eisenstein and Pudovkin that would form the backbone of international art cinema. But both Tarkovsky and Paradjanov acknowledged Dovzhenko as their lasting inspiration from this era.

10 **Bed and Sofa (Tret'ia Meshchanskaya)**

Abram Room, 1927

Not all Soviet silent cinema was epic or poetic. There were many filmmakers who wanted

to explore contemporary reality in the new society, but one of the boldest attempts to do so was hit by political in-fighting at home and censorship abroad because of its theme. Volodia is newly arrived in Moscow, and borrows a sofa from his friend Kolya, married to Liuda. When Kolya leaves town for work, an affair starts between Volodia and Liuda, leading to the husband moving out, before he returns to sleep on the sofa. Viktor Shklovsky's script was inspired by a newspaper story about two men both believing they might be the father of a baby born to a woman they lived with, and it recalled an old Bolshevik belief in 'free love', which had been largely ignored since the Revolution.



Gagging order: *A Cottage on Dartmoor*



Ludmilla Semyonova in *Bed and Sofa*



Maria Falconetti in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*

With excellent performances by three rising young actors (Vladimir Fogel, Nikolai Batalov and Ludmilla Semyonova), carefully designed décor and rare glimpses of Moscow, Abram Room's film was initially praised for demonstrating that everyday Soviet life could be filmically interesting. But in the febrile world of Soviet politics, with Stalin's cultural revolution imminent, factional opposition began to mount, denouncing it as a 'tearful comedy' or an 'apology for adultery', and the film played for only a week in Moscow cinemas. Abroad, it would provoke equal controversy, less for its politics than its moral frankness, and for broaching the taboo subject of abortion. A major success in Germany and France, it had only limited screenings in a cut version in Britain and was never shown commercially in America. For the young Paul Rotha, who saw it at the Film Society in London, it represented a welcome antidote to Soviet "left wing" rhetoric as an "unequalled instance of pure psychological, intimate, cinematic representation of human character". "See it at all costs," urged the trendy journal *Close Up*.

11 A Cottage on Dartmoor

Anthony Asquith, 1929

America wasn't alone in seeing a last-minute surge of creative filmmaking as the talkies began, although Britain's year of transition was 1929. Of the two most ambitious films that appeared in both silent and sound versions – Hitchcock's *Blackmail* and Asquith's *A Cottage on Dartmoor* – the latter now seems the more intriguing discovery. A co-production with Swedish Biograph, it took Anthony Asquith to the very edge of experimental editing, on a par with Eisenstein's in *The Old and the New*. The story also marked an attempt to escape overused screen locations and characters.

Set in the West Country, it begins with a convict's escape from Dartmoor prison, then switches into extended flashback to trace the build-up to his crime of passion. Here, as in Asquith's earlier *Underground* (now also restored), there's a strong sense of the narrowness and frustration of provincial life that runs through so much English literature. But the aristocratic Asquith manages treats this with both humour – in a visit to the cinema, with the anti-hero spying on his beloved – and ultimately drama, as his frustration reaches snapping-point in the barber's shop where they both work. These virtuoso sequences show that Asquith was not only well aware of advanced German and Russian montage techniques, but trying to drag British filmmaking into the modern era using the formal freedom of silent syntax.

The prejudices of British critics long discouraged exploring this most fertile period beyond the achievements of Hitchcock – and recent BFI restorations have shown just how little attention was paid to even his silents, apart from *The Lodger*. But alongside Hitchcock and Asquith, we can now savour the extraordinary feminism of Elvey's *Hindle Wakes* (1927) and Dupont's *Piccadilly* (1929), with its sardonic contrast between backstage life in the West End and the vibrant ethnic diversity of Limehouse.



Land's sake: Alexander Dovzhenko's 'sensuous, ecstatic' *Earth*

12 The Passion of Joan of Arc

Carl Dreyer, 1928

Dreyer's austere treatment of the trial and martyrdom of Joan of Arc has become one of the most widely shown and admired of all silents, attracting many musicians to compose a musical counterpoint, including most recently Adrian Utley (Portishead) and Will Gregory (Goldfrapp). Apart from chauvinistic protests against a Danish director handling an iconic French subject, it was immediately hailed as a masterpiece, with the *New York Times* critic claiming it took "precedence over anything that has so far been produced... [making] other pictures appear but trivial in comparison". Rotha's influential 1930 history *The Film Till Now* called it "immortal", adding that "from a pictorial point of view the selection of visual images has never before or since been approached in any production" (although he also argued that it lacked "real filmic properties").

Despite such early praise, the film suffered the fate of many expensive high-profile late silents, nearly bankrupting its producers when its limited exhibition failed to recoup the costs of the massive sets (which are rarely seen in a film of relentless close-ups) and long production schedule. Like *Metropolis*, it was soon crudely shortened, and the original materials believed lost until a copy of Dreyer's original version was discovered in Oslo in the early 80s, making possible today's high-quality versions. Through all this tangled history, the film has undoubtedly

survived because of Dreyer's single-minded focus on Joan's persecution and faltering resistance to her interrogators, which he based on recently edited records of the trial. Equally important has been the extraordinary performance by Maria Falconetti, a stage actress who had appeared in only one earlier film and who Dreyer had perform without make-up. Jean-Luc Godard paid tribute to the film's remarkable modernity, or timelessness, when he showed Anna Karina moved to tears by it in his 1962 *Vivre sa vie*.

13 An Italian Straw Hat

René Clair, 1927

René Clair may have become the forgotten man of classic French cinema, despite a prolific career that stretched from the dada short *Entr'acte* (1924) through the first French musicals of the early 30s, and up to the mid-1960s. Yet his command of sophisticated comedy, both silent and sound, was second to none; and in this inventive adaptation of a vintage farce he offered a spirited alternative to the dominance of Hollywood comedy, at a time when both the French avant garde and mainstream cinema had reached an impasse. Clair's solution, in agreeing to film Eugene Labiche's vintage stage play, was to update it to the *belle époque* of 1895 and to shoot it with the utmost simplicity, in the style of early film.

Labiche's play was always a satire on petit bourgeois pretension, with the nurseryman as keen that his daughter should marry a 'gentleman of leisure' as Ferdinand is to secure his future. Everything that gets in the way of the wedding represents a threat to the social order that is being confirmed; and in this case most of the obstacles are objects, signs of property and status, which constantly threaten to get out of hand. Orson Welles recognised Labiche's insight

Stalin and his henchmen were right to mistrust Dovzhenko, since his films are all more poetic than reliably propagandist

into bourgeois anxiety when he staged the play in 1936 as *Horse Eats Hat*, emphasising the incongruity of the original problem. And Clair is equally alert to the satirical undercurrent, without ever losing sight of what Henri Bergson termed the “snowball effect... as an object rolls through the play collecting incidents as it goes”.

The surrealists, who hated avant-garde pretension, saw that this was no mere literary adaptation. With its puppet-like characters trapped in their roles, and décor that threatens to engulf them, it achieves the dream-like quality that surrealism prized – while also remaining a thoroughly civilised, scathing and completely French comedy.

14 A Page of Madness

Teinosuke Kinugasa, 1926

Back in the early 1920s, before silent film became remotely fashionable, a mesmerising Japanese film from 1926 appeared, with an atmospheric soundtrack credited to the ‘Modern Bamboo Flute Ensemble’. Set in a mental hospital, the film retraces how one of the patients tried to drown herself and her baby son, and is now watched over by her husband, who has become the hospital’s janitor in the hope of rescuing her. Although prolific, Kinugasa was virtually unknown alongside the acknowledged masters who had started in the silent period, Mizoguchi and Ozu, other than for his opulent samurai drama *Gate of Hell* (1953). *A Page of Madness* had been discovered in a garden shed, and with vigorous promotion and the enthusiastic support of mainstream critics became a hit on the radical film circuit, together with another orphan silent from Soviet Russia, Alexander Medvedkin’s 1934 *Happiness*.

In retrospect, this revival of interest may have owed something to the ‘anti-psychiatry’ movement then in vogue, and the popularity of Antonin Artaud, but Kinugasa’s film most obviously referenced the deranged expressionist world of Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919). However, the multiple superimpositions and narrative poignancy of *Page of Madness* are subtler than Wiene’s jagged nightmare world. Produced with the avant-garde Shinkankaku-ha or New Sensations group, the film was adapted from a story by Yasunari Kawabata, who would be the first Japanese writer to receive the Nobel Prize in 1968. Kinugasa became one of the first Japanese directors to travel abroad at the end of the 20s, visiting Europe and Moscow, although he had already used Soviet montage techniques in his equally dizzying *Crossroads* (1928), set in the Yoshiwara pleasure district of Tokyo, and surely also due for revival?

15 Un Chien andalou

Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí, 1928

Of all cinema’s very short ‘shorts’ – at just 15 minutes – this explosive debut by the young Buñuel and Dalí remains as provocative and mysterious as it was in 1929, and demands not to be shouldered aside by features. It was almost impossible to see until the 1960s, due to censorship taboos, but the addition of a soundtrack, supposedly reproducing the original accompaniment



Found art: Teinosuke Kinugasa’s *A Page of Madness*, long lost, was rediscovered in a garden shed

‘Un Chien andalou’, as provocative and mysterious as in 1929, demands not to be shouldered aside by features

of gramophone records alternating between the ‘Liebestod’ from Wagner’s *Tristan* and a tango, gave the film a vast new lease of life.

The film was a product of an authentically surrealist collaboration, as Buñuel and Dalí swapped fetishistic dream images and rigorously rejected any narrative logic. But *Un Chien andalou* also invokes the golden age of cine-poems or ‘absolute films’, which proliferated in the late 1920s. The most famous of these were made in Paris, often by visitors like Buñuel and Dalí, or Man Ray (*L’Étoile de mer*), Dimitri Kirsanov (*Ménilmontant, Brumes d’automne*), Eisenstein and Aleksandrov (*Romance sentimentale*). And

although the French filmmakers who came to be known as a semi-official ‘avant-garde’ – Delluc, Gance, Epstein, L’Herbier, Dulac, Chomette – produced many features in ‘impressionist’ and other experimental styles, their best work was often in short form, equivalent to poetry or to ‘motion painting’, as in Fernand Léger’s influential *Ballet mécanique* (1924).

Elsewhere, the ‘absolute film’ movement in Germany pioneered abstract animation and elaborate trick-films such as Seeber’s *Kipho*, while in Holland and Belgium Joris Ivens and Henri Storck made polemical documentaries that inspired other radical filmmakers. A growing network of cine clubs and film societies throughout Europe circulated these short films, often shown along with the emerging canon of silent ‘classics’, providing inspiration for future filmmakers and critics. 📺

Sample clips from the 15 films will be available at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound



Hello, Dalí: *Un Chien andalou*

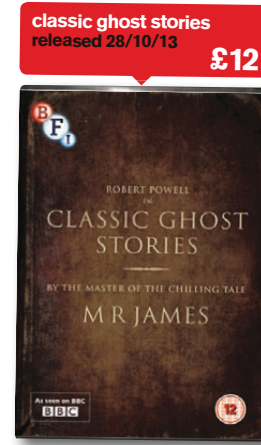
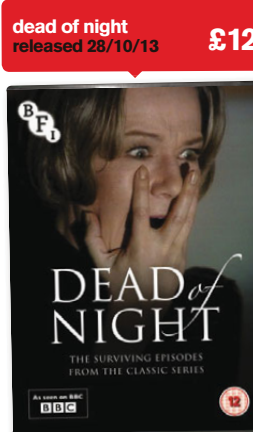
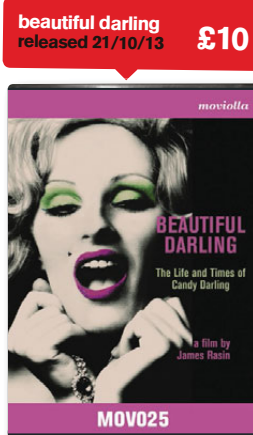
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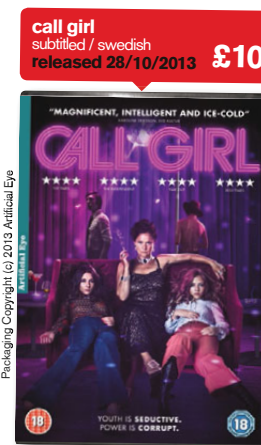
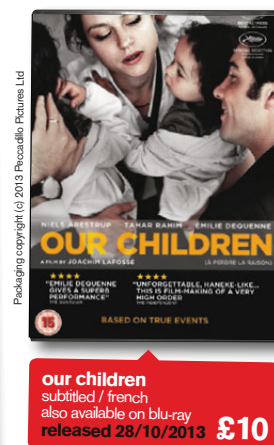
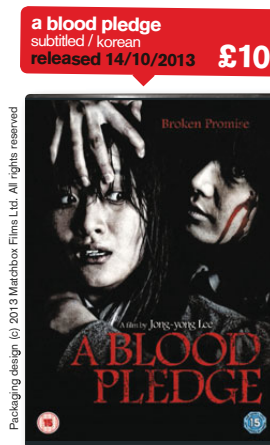
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PREVIEW

COMING UP FOR AIR

Toronto's Wavelengths strand offers an experimental, art-centric refuge amid TIFF's marketplace bustle and pre-awards-season buzz

By Jason Anderson

The Toronto International Film Festival is defined by a daunting sense of immensity. With its slate of 288 features and many thousands of visiting luminaries and professionals, all clamouring for sidewalk space with the teeming masses of local patrons, the festival threatens to overwhelm.

Indeed, it's a frequent criticism that TIFF is too big for even the most dedicated attendees to do more than skim the surface over its 11 days and nights. Perhaps hoping to preempt grouching, artistic director Cameron Bailey answered that charge in a statement published on the eve of the festival's 38th edition. "We want it big," he concluded with a note of defiance, "because size matters."

Because of that overriding desire to be

all things to all comers, TIFF's most vital programmes are those that function as micro-festivals within the wider maelstrom. Whether they sought out the genre fare of *Midnight Madness*, savoured the restorations of key works by David Cronenberg and Lino Brocka in the TIFF Cinematheque programme or investigated the new Greek filmmakers featured in the City to City spotlight on Athens, festival-goers found some sites of refuge.

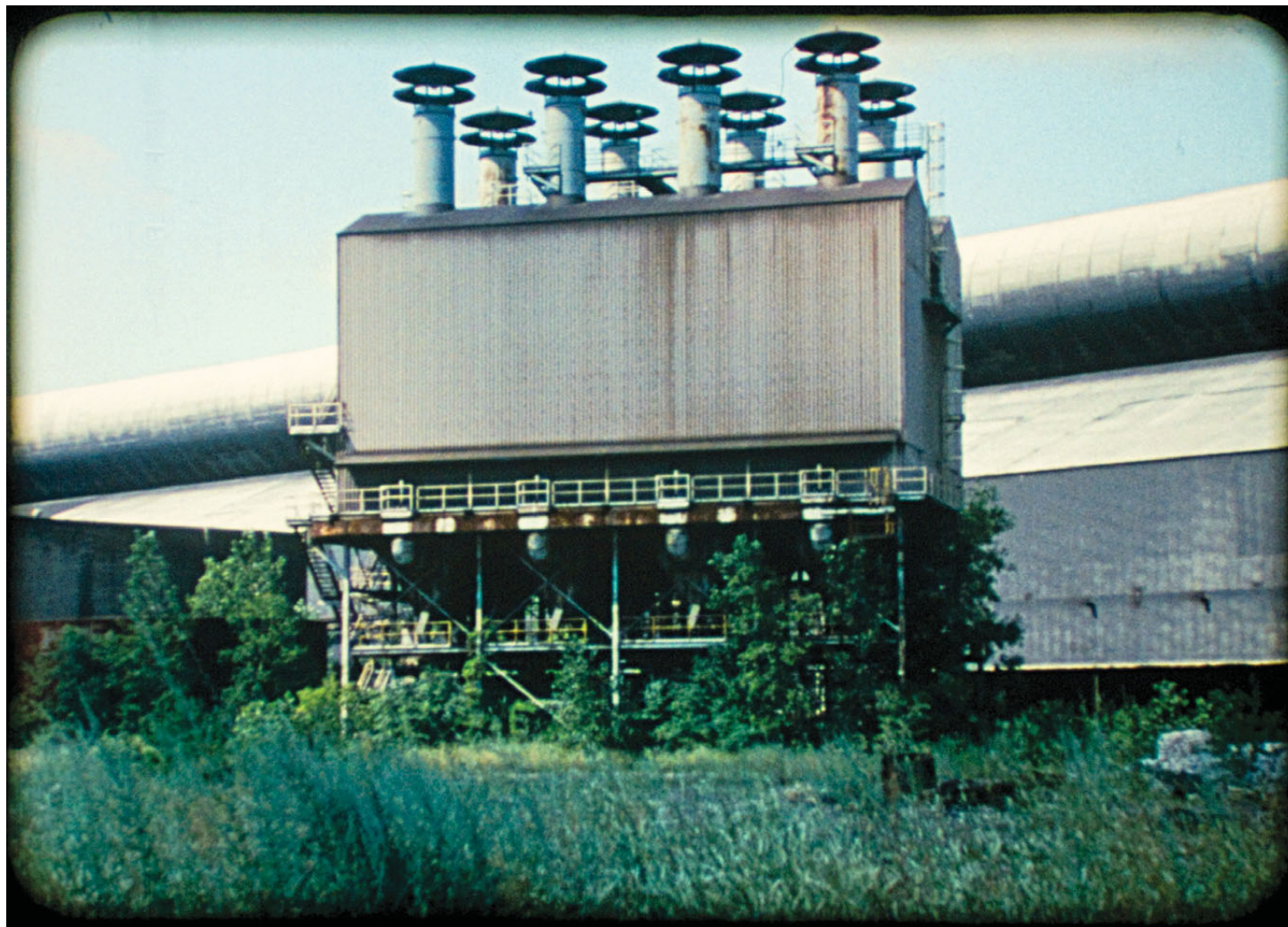
Now in its 13th year as TIFF's avant-garde showcase, Wavelengths may command the fiercest loyalty. Ironically, it benefited from Bailey's "size matters" philosophy when the programme expanded to combine its core focus on experimental shorts and mid-length works with the features that had been presented under the banner of Visions. Under savvy head programmer Andréa Picard, Wavelengths has evolved into a decidedly art-centric counterbalance to TIFF's more commercial-minded guises as bustling market and launch pad for Hollywood's awards-season hopefuls.

Wavelengths' value as a sanctuary for

overstimulated eyes and ears was most starkly demonstrated by a programme of silent 16mm works by two American masters. A regular visitor to Wavelengths with his ever-shifting and beautifully fragmentary meditations on light, surface and space, Nathaniel Dorsky presented two new films. Whereas *Song* displays an autumnal and urban nature in its images of rainy city streets at twilight and ghostly reflections on shop windows, *Spring* lives up to its name with its sun-dappled celebration of the verdant. One can only hope that the flowers survived being smushed against Dorsky's camera lens.

Both efforts are well-matched with *Three Landscapes*, a 47-minute work by Peter Hutton which juxtaposes emblems of industrial decay in Hutton's hometown of Detroit with agricultural

Wavelengths' value as a sanctuary for overstimulated senses was demonstrated by a series of silent 16mm works



Man and nature: Peter Hutton's *Three Landscapes* is less a portrait of place than a study of labour, born of a fascination with figures moving across vast spaces

goings on in the Hudson River Valley and workers toiling in the salt flats of the Dallol Depression in Ethiopia. The result is arguably less a portrait of place than a study of labour, one born of Hutton's patient fascination with the movement of figures across vast spaces.

Another set of mid-length works successfully combined an impressive recent outing by an old lion with two reliably inventive young mavericks. In *Un Conte de Michel Montaigne*, Jean-Marie Straub situates a dense 16th-century text by Montaigne within a strictly arranged pattern of musical and visual references to draw parallels between our troubled epoch and that of the seminal essayist, presented here in the form of his statue in the Square Paul Painlevé in Paris.

Offering a rather more playful take on historical matters, João Pedro Rodrigues's *The King's Body* uses the words and bodies of a real-life cast of beefy musclemen to reenact and reflect on the life and legacy of Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques. Placed against a variety of backdrops with the help of green-screen trickery, Rodrigues's sword-toting subjects strike suitably heroic poses. But it's their comments about their lives that give the film its richness, by suggesting ways in which the country's current woes influence contemporary notions of national identity and codes of manhood.

The travails of the Eurozone also play a prominent part in Miguel Gomes's 23-minute short *Redemption*, his first effort since last year's Berlin prize-winner and Wavelengths standout *Tabu*. Reprising the voiceover narration that worked wonders in its predecessor, the Portuguese director's latest unites four fictional monologues with a series of poignant found-footage vignettes. The narration's acutely melancholy expressions of love, longing and regret take a deliciously witty turn when their reputed authors are revealed. It's a shame to give Gomes's game away but – spoiler alert! – who could've imagined the hidden depths of Angela Merkel's soul?

Further instances of ingenuity and audacity distinguished Wavelengths' line-up of features. Along with North American premieres of justly acclaimed films from Cannes (Rithy Panh's devastating *The Missing Picture*) and Venice (Tsai Ming-Liang's *Stray Dogs*), highlights included several titles that had surfaced elsewhere but which benefited from the extra attention and sympathetic context that Wavelengths provided. One example was Cristi Puiu's *Three Interpretation Exercises*, a dazzling series of Rohmerian riffs on class, art, morality and the holy gospels which the Romanian auteur originally developed with a group of actors in Toulouse in 2011. A modestly scaled yet quietly astonishing debut by German filmmaker Ramon Zürcher, which won the new talent award at CPH:PIX in Copenhagen, *The Strange Little Cat* earned a similar degree of admiration for its precise and curiously feline reconfigurations of time and space within the confines of a Berlin apartment.

Arriving fresh from Locarno, *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness* proves a harmonious synthesis of the distinct aesthetics of its two directors: London's Ben Rivers and the Chicago-based Ben Russell. Tapping in to the filmmakers' shared interest



Nathaniel Dorsky's *Spring*

in social dynamics, temporary autonomous zones and transcendent ritual, the three-part film follows a mysterious figure – played by experimental musician Robert A.A. Lowe – as he experiences a variety of environments.

Lowe projects an air of dignified solitude as he lives rough in the wilds of northern Finland, but is unexpectedly sociable when cooking and cavorting with the high-spirited members of a commune in Estonia. The finale takes place in a dark, dank Norwegian club where Lowe dons sinister facepaint to perform a set of incantatory heavy metal with Hunter Hunt-Hendrix of the black metal band Liturgy, among others. Though the film's first two sections have a close kinship with Rivers' works like *Two Years at Sea* and *I Know Where I'm Going*, the last matches the anarchic power of Russell's *Black & White Trypps* series. Regardless of which creator exerted the most control, the whole is greater than its startling if sometimes inscrutable parts.

One of two features getting world premieres in the section, *I'm the same I'm another* is a rare miss for Wavelengths, despite two strong and largely wordless performances by its leads. This second feature by Belgium's Caroline Strubbe is a sequel to her first, *Lost Persons Area*. It opens in the time-honoured tradition of the road movie – a badly weathered car heads through a tunnel and into territory unknown. The driver is 30-year-old Szabolcs (Zoltán Miklós Hajdu), who seems too distraught to communicate. His only passenger is Tess (Kimke Desart), a nine-year-old girl who bears signs of

emotional trauma and whose connection to her guardian will remain ambiguous for much of the film. After taking a ferry to the UK, they hole up in a grey and grubby seaside town and gradually emerge from their respective shells.

With its shades of Wim Wenders's *Alice in the Cities* and effective use of the music and voice of Chet Baker (the source of the film's title), the film has compelling moments of fraught tension and unexpected tenderness. Yet the narrative grows meandering and repetitive, and it is short of the formal daring expected of Wavelengths' offerings.

That's hardly a flaw shared by *La última película*, the programme's boldest and most abrasive assault on prevailing cinematic conventions, including the medium's almost complete abandonment of film itself. This was the festival's only new feature to be screened from a 35mm print – not that maintaining aesthetic purity is necessarily a concern for directors Mark Peranson and Raya Martin, whose collaborative effort pays cheeky homage to Dennis Hopper's *The Last Movie*. The constantly disintegrating storyline deals with an arrogant American filmmaker who comes to the Yucatan peninsula to make a movie that will yoke the end of cinema to the end of the world, as per Mayan predictions. Played with a pitch-perfect sense of imperial entitlement by Alex Ross Perry (director of *The Color Wheel*), *La última película*'s central ugly American also serves as a handy vessel for ideals espoused in the pages of *Cinema Scope*, the Toronto-based magazine that Peranson oversees in between his programming duties for Locarno and Vancouver film festivals. With its caustically funny blend of elegy and manifesto, the film often seems explicitly pitched at the journal's readers and writers (I include myself in both categories).

As multiple renditions of the filmmaker's Mexican misadventures butt up against stranger-than-fiction footage of new-age revellers awaiting the apocalypse, it all continually teeters on the edge of collapse, but the enterprise's bravado is often exhilarating too. If *La última película* marks an end for film stock as a means of immortalising grand ambitions and grander delusions, Peranson and Martin make sure this final note sounds nothing like a whimper. ☺



Miguel Gomes's *Redemption*

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WALKOW'S WAY

Lynch, Bolaño, Dostoevsky, Rohmer and Corman are just a few of the eclectic influences of a low-budget opportunist existentialist

by **Iain Sinclair**

Gary Walkow does good weird. Smart weird. In *Callers* (2009), a hands-in-pockets hulk in heavy black spectacles is buzzed by his dead girlfriend on her little pink phone. In *Radio Mary* (2013), a young woman, channelling Kafka and Philip K. Dick, is cursed with the gift of hearing other people's thoughts. Weird things happen in ordinary places: white-walled interiors around which insomniac Californians drift with sleepwalking precision, nursing breakdowns, the blood of the moon in their contact lenses. Like Magritte, Walkow likes to freeze his characters for interrogation; post-traumatic women with murders in the head, awkward men with a Russian attachment to the futile gesture. They are registered from behind with a steady stare: sculptural shapes caught in the narrow angle of quiet corridors, depth suggested by an empty mirror.

In Walkow's translation of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1995), the metaphor is made literal, time stops, nothing moves; beads of water on the narrow slit of a blue basement window, clutter on a table. After three or four Walkow features, you get to know the geography: the same red brick wall, the same verdant steps, the same bridge with the same lamps, the incipient derangement of bougainvillea-scented suburbs. Everybody is between jobs, between books, nice-looking in an unspectacular way; regretful for past relationships, incapable of sustaining anything new. They have no money, in a Santa Monica way, with available cars, laptops, lawyers and editors.

Walkow calls his project "existential": this hell of perpetual sunshine, great coffee, quotation architecture. Slacker philosophical dialogues over untouched food. Midnight exchanges as language-battles between opposing life forms. Accidental fucks with the wrong partner. Some of the more interesting characters are detectives, figures of fate in slick black suits who look as if they've been transferred from HBO boxed-sets to this world of unreadable maniacs: a hit of David Lynch, a snort of Roberto Bolaño. They stand in for the mainstream critics who can't get a handle on what the generically promiscuous director is up to: Walkow doesn't fit. If I say Eric Rohmer reimagined by Roger Corman, that is a comment on the pinched budgets, as much as the abiding flavour of cultural estrangement in an environment where the inhabitants work hard at doing very little and are, all too visibly, coming apart at the seams.

I met Walkow at a film event at Trinity Buoy Wharf at the mouth of East London's River Lea. Soon afterwards, he sent me a DVD of *Notes from Underground*. The film worked even better when I watched it again on a laptop. Walkow admits to the influence of Jim McBride's 1968 underground classic, *David Holzman's Diary*, a nice conceit about a self-cannibalised life dedicated to the madness of film-as-confession.



Beatified: Courtney Love as Joan Vollmer in Gary Walkow's *Beat*

Walkow calls his project 'existential': this hell of perpetual sunshine, great coffee, quotation architecture

Holzman is performed by L.M. Kit Carson, who did the screenplay for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* and got a writing credit for *Paris, Texas*. Nervy connections float somewhere at the back of Walkow's novels-as-movies (made) and novels-as-novels (unpublished). The economics of all this is mysterious. Phone calls to friends, family, patrons. The favours by name actors: good bits delivered by Alex Kingston, Kiefer Sutherland weekending as William Burroughs.

Seven features were completed, between 1987 and 2013, without any obvious sense of compromise. (The truth was more stressful. The Walkow novel, *As Bad As It Gets*, describes the nightmare of shooting *Beat* in Mexico while coping with the high-maintenance diva-dramas of the magnificent Courtney Love.) But *Notes from Underground* was a good place to start, a monologue straight to self-operated camera: "I'm a sick man." The shift between frowning video soliloquy and the drama of

willed shame convinces, while the narrative pivots on the actorly intensity of the male lead, Henry Czerny, and the quietude of the attractively bovine Sheryl Lee as the prostitute.

The real Walkow hit came when I found a DVD of *Beat* (2000) in a Hastings charity shop. Here was a truly Mexican take on the infamous episode when William Burroughs (Kiefer Sutherland) tried to shoot a glass from the head of his wife, Joan Vollmer (Courtney Love). He missed. And had to absorb that guilt into the karma of authorship. A long life followed as he wrote his way out of the word fix. Walkow's modest subterranean memoir was truer to the Beat ethos than any of Hollywood's posthumous and over-researched properties that bought very little from the literary estates beyond the titles. In *Beat*, the tapeworm of raw sex remains untasted at the bottom of the bottle. Dialogue ventriloquises bohemian ghosts like a scrambled echo, through tins and string, of Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*.

Beat had an important role to play in the book I was labouring over, *American Smoke* (*Journeys to the End of the Light*), and then in a year-long film curation project. I was invited to nominate 70 films for my 70th birthday. I trawled through the books I had published, tweezing out movie references for a refracted autobiography. *Beat* went straight into the catalogue. Now, having viewed, several times, all the Walkow films, I recognise Gary as being caught in that Burroughs equation: he lives to set up the next film, which is always a variant on what has gone before. The rooms where he happens to perch become sets. Spending time in Cambridge, Walkow has finished shooting *Caffiend*, his first English road movie, in which Neil Morrissey appears alongside Gary's two children. It's time we took some serious notice of this provocative passerine. **S**

Iain Sinclair introduces a screening of *Beat* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, on 7 November, and will be in conversation with director Gary Walkow afterwards



Intense: Henry Czerny in *Notes from Underground*

PSYCHIC WEATHER

Neither neoclassical nor socialist-realist, Eduard Artemiev's scores for Tarkovsky seem to emerge from the natural worlds of the films

by Daniel Barrow

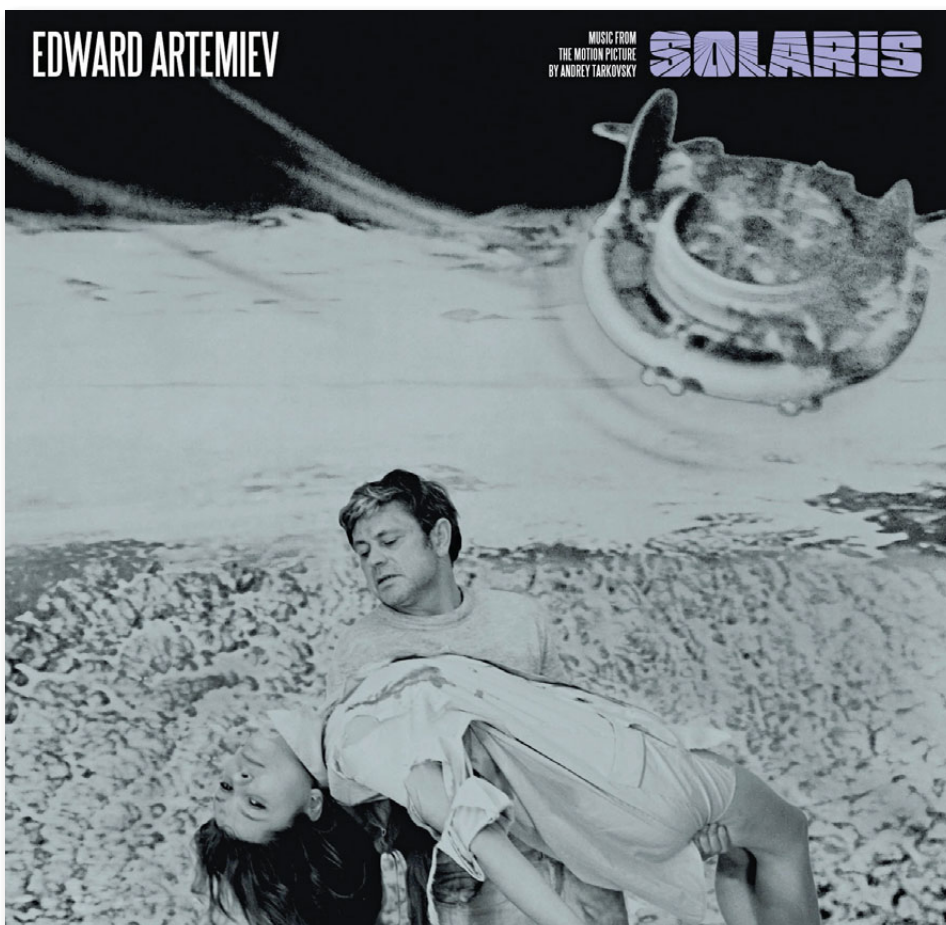
A last-chance tavern with flickering striplights and a single table picked out in white against the chiaroscuro background. Drifting around this scene, its elements entering before the fade-in, are layers of single-note electronic drones, spare and oddly fragile, like shakuhachi melodies; a top line plays note clusters, a string instrument with an oddly metallic timbre, bathing in its own luxurious decay sustained by echo. The sighing strings – the instrument is a tar, a five-stringed Persian lute – recall the tradition of the Aeolian harp, that strange technology at the threshold of nature and culture. Sound blows in as if from the natural world that waits behind the camera, its muck already plastering the floorboards. The violent yellow Cyrillic letters translate as: “Music by Eduard Artemiev”.

Stalker (1979) was the last of Artemiev's three scores for Andrei Tarkovsky. Their collaboration spanned Tarkovsky's most productive period in the 1970s, ended by his ostentatious departure for the West. After years of circulating in bootleg form, the scores have recently joined the gravy train of luxury soundtrack reissues in the form of lavish vinyl editions on Mirumir Records.

But while the scores have been cult objects for decades, Tarkovsky seems to have been unenthusiastic about them. In his book *Sculpting in Time* (1986) he casts film as exclusively an art of the integral image; Tarkovsky regarded music as mostly “a facile system of illustration”, and didn’t “believe films need music at all”. In his published diaries Artemiev merits hardly a mention, except a “to hell with him” for delays on the *Mirror* soundtrack. *Ivan's Childhood* and *Andrei Rublev* had bombastic neoclassical scores from Vyacheslav Ovcinnikov and Tarkovsky reverted, after his defection, to western classical music.

The astounding juxtaposition of sound and image in these 70s films is, then, both anomalous and the product of circumstances that point to what we might call the hidden political aesthetics of Tarkovsky's work. Ian Christie has commented that, in spite of his rejection of it, the public culture of the Brezhnevite USSR made Tarkovsky's films – including their sound – possible. Certainly, the closest comparable soundtracks in Hollywood and European art film of the time (Kubrick's use of Penderecki in *The Shining*, for instance, or the chattering quasi-concrete score to Donald Cammell's *Demon Seed*) were far less subtle. The striking exception – Jerry Goldsmith's score to *Alien* – owes much to Ridley Scott's plundering of *Solaris*.

The standard Soviet practice of adding all sound in post-production allowed Tarkovsky, Artemiev and their sound engineers to shatter the false naturalism of socialist realism. In *Stalker*, the plash of footsteps, the rattling of metal and glass, the hush of wind exist on the same level as music in Vladimir Sharun's sound design; as



Otherworldly melodies: Artemiev's music for *Solaris* influenced Jerry Goldsmith's *Alien* score

Stalker (Aleksandr Kaidanovsky) and Writer (Anatoly Solonitsyn) stand paralysed in the ‘dry tunnel’, a pitch-black electronic rumbling runs barely perceptibly beneath the clamour of the waterfall, to explode as it cuts to a volcanic vent growling with steaming water. The suck, clatter and snuffle of *Stalker*'s wife's (Alisa Freindlikh) speech crush her words as if she were eating the microphone, acoustically shrinking the dimensions of their hovel and inaugurating the film's combination of squalor and unearthliness.

Artemiev's sonic events waver deliriously between abstract threads or facets of tonal colour and everyday sounds, so that the design

While Artemiev's scores are cult objects, Tarkovsky didn't 'believe films need music at all'

collapses together diegetic and artificial sound. When Kris (Donatas Banionis) arrives on the station orbiting *Solaris*, he reacts, eyes darting, to clangs, pings and metallic buzzings indistinguishable from earlier music. As the trio of *Stalker* ride toward the Zone, the regular clank of their trolley-car is increasingly echoed, glassy drones and shimmering skeins



Tarkovsky



Artemiev

of noise entering unobtrusively, as if they were the ambient soundscape of the prospect passing by in tracking shot – industrial ruins and detritus passing over into trees, river and scentless Technicolor flowers.

By the time of *Stalker*, the score is so abstract and so integrated into the Foley track and dialogue that sound itself becomes a kind of psychic weather, shifting like wind, grass, water or mist through the image, intentless and mobile as the realm of dream. The music is, as Tarkovsky wished, barely apprehended as *music*. It appears, rather, to emerge out of the muteness and austerity of the image, its opacity to analysis made audible; as Robert Bird writes, it “exerts an almost material resistance”. The wind-under-the-door drones accompanying *Solaris* and *Stalker*’s watery tracking shots mark out spaces in which nature becomes uncanny, in which time reveals its otherness, imaged in frozen processes of transformation or ruin. Love, art, militarism and the commodity world fall back into inorganic disorder, swept away by the river of time. The recollected time of memory returns as leitmotifs that shift, as in the moment after Ignat reads a passage to an absent figure in *Mirror*, into sour, shredding noise. Bach’s rigidly organised organ chorale dissolves under Artemiev’s interventions, but the remaining fragments insist, like the memory of a lost home.

The sensual, dangerous ambiguity of the image, suspended between stillness and motion, clarity and haziness, past and present, technology and nature, is captured by Deleuze’s description of *Mirror* as “unable to go beyond the condition of a liquid crystal which keeps its secret”. For Tarkovsky, as for Proust, the image was the privileged medium of memory. But what better metaphor is there for this suspension than sound, crystallising in memory and into musical patterns even as it threatens to disappear? Why is it that his late films, free of Artemiev’s uncanny influence and groaning under the weight of externally imposed Great Music, are so curdled into despairing longueurs? Recall the deafening interior shower of rain at the end of *Stalker* or the wind that sighs through the rippling bushes beneath Artemiev’s synthesisers in the final dream-sequence of *Mirror*. Time lost and time regained are nothing in Tarkovsky without being heard. ⑤



Sensual ambiguity marks Artemiev’s scores

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

Mobile apps for sharing ultra-short movies hark back to the experimental eclecticism of Victorian filmmaking



Hollywood meets Vine: JayReh and his brother

By Bryony Dixon

The short form is hot news. Current chatter about what you can do with six seconds of video – the format popularised by the video-sharing mobile app Vine – brings to mind the heyday of Victorian cinema, when film itself was new on the scene. Back in the 1890s, films were similarly limited in terms of length; reels of celluloid were typically about 40 feet, yielding a comparatively luxurious 30 seconds of running time. What the pioneers of film chose to do with those seconds is remarkably similar to what today’s Viners and Instagrammers choose to do. “What I like about Vine is that you can tell a story, tell a joke or do a trick all with six seconds,” noted JayReh, a devotee of the app who has clocked up more than 200,000 likes, on a recent *Newsnight* report. His six-second video loop shows him making his younger brother ‘disappear’, exploiting what Méliès found out about stop motion over a century before.

Early catalogues of films are full of shorts that tell a story or a joke or do a trick. After initial experiments with pointing at and shooting anything in view, filmmakers had to raise their game, and short running times demand immediate impact. Jokes were easy. In the Lumières’ much imitated *L’Arroseur arrosé* (1895), a mischievous child stands on a hosepipe; the gardener stares down the nozzle; the child steps off it... It was an instant hit. Trick films worked well too: reversing the film was an early favourite, as were magical appearances and disappearances, ghostly superimpositions and animations. The short form was also good for promotion; if you couldn’t make a film of a four-hour Shakespeare play, you could promote one, as Biograph’s *King John* (1899) did. In under two minutes, we get Shakespeare and celebrity, with the great Herbert Beerbohm Tree performing the death scene to push his production at Her Majesty’s Theatre. Everything you could do with film was tried in those first few years, both in terms of genre – news, comedy, drama, documentary, porn, advertisements, animations, literary

Visual gags and tricks work as well on Vine as they did on Victorian film

adaptations, Christmas specials and kids’ films, all squeezed into a minute or two – and technical innovation. Synchronised sound, colour and 3D were all tried in the 1890s; they just didn’t become commercially viable at that time.

Visual gags and tricks work as well on Vine as on Victorian film; anything that looks like your holiday snaps won’t cut it. The first piece I saw back at the dawn of Vine (was it only January?) showed three guys in a ring spraying each other in the face with water in turn; the fact that the app plays clips on an everlasting loop gave the video a satisfying circularity. Ditto Victorian cinema: one of the most successful early films (now a modest YouTube hit, with 177,129 views at the time of writing) was *The May Irwin Kiss* (1896), an intimate close-up of a man and woman kissing that audiences wanted to see played over and over again. The *Independent* recently celebrated the simplicity of the six-second format, saying “it forces you to be creative... it’s like the early days of cinema”. Well, quite. But things move quickly these days. It was the story film that prompted longer running times 100 years ago, just as it has in the world of video sharing, with various platforms such as Instagram now offering ways to join your 15-second segments into hour-long films.

Another TV report, on BBC2’s *The Culture Show*, discussed the implicit threat of video-sharing to TV: even arty Vine-meisters can accrue millions of followers, while star YouTubers can actually make a living out of tiny increments from advertising revenues. *Newsnight*’s David Grossman noted that the parent companies of these apps are Google, Twitter and Facebook: “many of the global tech players have a dog in the fight and none of them can afford to lose”. The potential here, according to mobile app expert Guy Rosen, “is unimaginable. This is billions and billions of dollars in value” – if they can figure out how to monetise it. Facebook/Instagram recently failed in their bid to change their privacy policy with the aim of increasing advertising revenue in the face of mass consumer resistance.

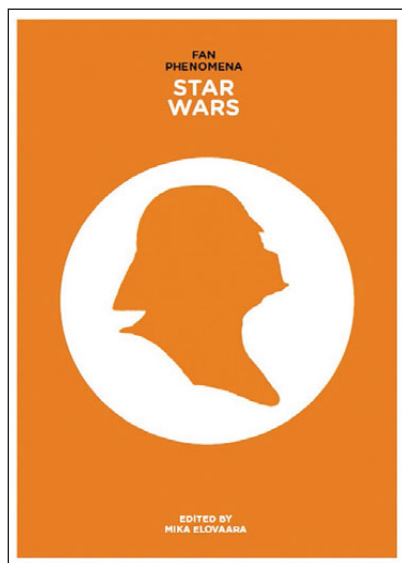
Perhaps the TV execs should relax and take the long view. Popularity may shift but formats never completely die. In its day, cinema didn’t entirely kill off the music hall, then TV didn’t entirely kill cinema and video didn’t kill the radio star – well, not now he’s signed up on Instagram. ⑤

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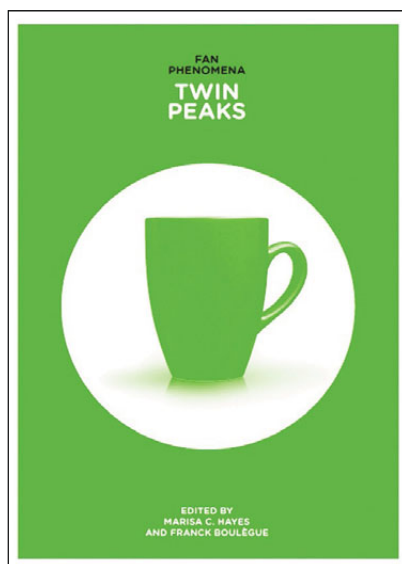
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CLAP, CLAP, CLAP

Elizabeth Price's Turner Prize-winning videos deploy a variety of languages in an attempt to explore hidden histories and memories

By Melissa Gronlund

When Elizabeth Price won the Turner Prize last year, she was in the almost unique position of having both critical and popular acclaim on side. Notes posted in Tate Britain's public feedback area read "clap, clap, clap", adopting one of the signal features of Price's work there – the sound of clapping hands from one section of her video – into a vote of affirmation for the musically atmospheric work. Comprising visually diverse material, from YouTube footage to digitally rendered imaginings of objects, Price's videos explore an array of subjects – past and imagined events, church choirs, the sun – in terms not only of the event or object itself but how it is apprehended and remembered. Aping administrative or archival language, Price's work is both critical and engaging, often marked by staccato rhythm or entrancing sound, and by a certain gloss and slickness that both charms and disarms the viewer.

Price was nominated for the Turner for a trilogy in which each work explored a locality: in *User Group Disco* (2009), it's an imaginary collection; in *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* (2012), the choir of a church and the Manchester Woolworths fire of 1979; and in *West Hinder* (2012), the sinking of a cargo ship carrying nearly 3,000 luxury cars. Drama unfolds within each site. *Choir*, for example, which incorporates printed images of choirs, digitally created architectural plans and footage of female singers, shows the choir of a church to be not only an element of ecclesiastical architecture but also related to the original ritual functions of the church and the collectivity that inheres in a group of people singing and moving together. A hand movement – a palm turned over, enigmatically – that Price noticed in the footage of dancing showgirls provided the link to the Woolworths fire: a woman, trapped in one of the upper storeys, makes a similar gesture in supplication. From this connection, Price forges a complex demonstration of collectivity and history, sacrifice and memory.

Price's interest in history is related closely to her focus on the archive, or the material effects that persist after an event has passed. She frequently uses iconography of administration and bookkeeping to show how events and things are registered in the collective consciousness. Her early film *A Public Lecture and Exhumation* (2006) looked at a never-fulfilled bequest by a man called Alexander Chalmers to the Stoke Newington Library, seeking to fulfil it cinematically, overlaying images of his papers and the blueprints of the library with shots of the present-day rooms of the library and images of what would have been in the gift. (Price eventually fulfilled every clause of the will, getting various people – artists and council workers – to stand in for the individuals named and instructed by the will.) *At the House of Mr X* (2007) imagines the home of a fictional art



The heat is on: Price's latest project, *SUNLIGHT*, examines changing historical representations of the sun

Price's work is critical and engaging, marked by staccato rhythm, entrancing sound and a gloss that charms and disarms

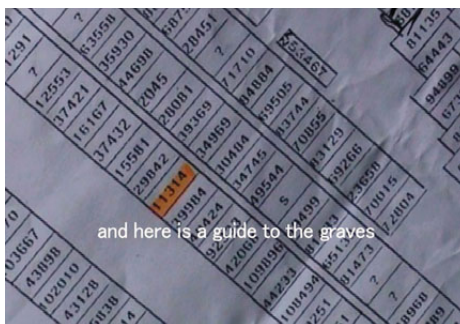
collector, with subtitles discussing the objects in a mix of curatorial and sales-speak – a considered and observant take on an often deliberately invisible section of the art world. The videos employ both the language and common tropes of relating information – subtitles, slides, educational or administrative text, encyclopaedia pages – just as information becomes digitised, immaterial and invisible. Price's work enacts a reclamation of visual access to knowledge.

This interest in administration also shows her keen ability to imitate the language she examines. *User Group Disco*, for example, which explores a fantasy collection of objects (all defunct), neatly stages the aura relating to objects of technology and design, emphasising their glossiness and uniqueness by placing them, as if in the dream world of status-conscious desire, spinning in space against a black background. In this way she works not only to articulate

the power objects hold over the viewer but to re-perform how this happens – a project both critical and performative. "The idea of the car and particularly its construction of masculine power," she said in a film made for the BALTIC Centre of Contemporary Art about what became her Turner Prize trilogy, "is expressed in *West Hinder* and... the arcane language that is used to describe the ecclesiastical architecture of the choir... These things are present in the work, they're part of the language, but they are also satirised."

Price's latest project is *SUNLIGHT* (2013), which opened in September at the newly located Focal Point Gallery in Southend-on-Sea. The first episode in a planned trilogy, it explores sunlight in terms of its social and technical histories. Price digitally animated nearly 1,000 glass-plate negatives taken of the sun on a daily basis from the years 1875 to 1930, creating not only an animation of the sun during that period but also an animation of changing historical representations. *SUNLIGHT*, like all of Price's work, not only depicts its subject but locates that depiction within a nexus of sociological and political forces normally unseen to the eye. ☞

i Elizabeth Price's *SUNLIGHT* will show at the Focal Point Gallery, Southend until 28 December



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★★★★★

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Geoffrey Macnab
The Independent

★★★★★

‘It’s an attempt to capture the historical connection between people and the land... a unique piece of work’

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The Times

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Geoff Andrew
in Sight & Sound



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★★★★★

‘A luxuriant purring poem of intertwined lives...bows out leaving us desperate for more’

Robbie Collin
The Daily Telegraph

★★★★★

‘Consistently engrossing, partly because in terms of its compositions, colours and sound design, it’s so elegant, and partly because one is constantly wondering... what’s going to happen’

Geoff Andrew
Time Out

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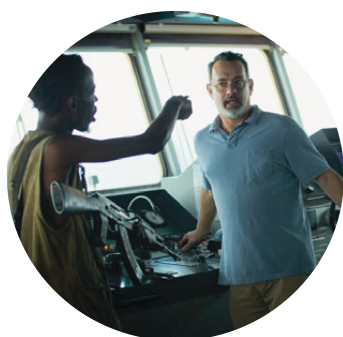


Reviews



87 **Prisoners**

In Denis Villeneuve's powerful and deftly twisting child-abduction thriller, Roger Deakins's pitilessly bleak November exteriors offer as little hope as his claustrophobic interiors, his camera peering through smeary windscreens and sneaking through corridors stalker-style



62 Films of the month



70 Films



96 Home Cinema



104 Books



A woman for all seasons: Veerle Baetens's stand-out performance takes her from seductive temptress to distraught mother

The Broken Circle Breakdown

Belgium/The Netherlands 2012

Director: Felix van Groeningen

Certificate 15 111m 45s

Reviewed by Gilda Williams

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

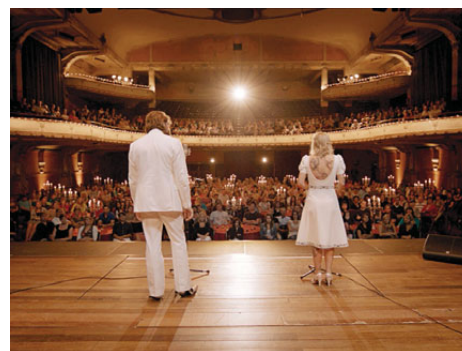
You'd be hard-pressed to think of a Big Theme missing from *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. Love. Loss. Death. Heartbreak. God. Faith. Guilt. Parenthood. Dreams. Rites of passage. The role of friends, music, ritual and home in the cycle of life. The cycle of life. In this big love story between bluegrass-playing cowboy Didier and lovely blonde tattoo artist Elise, set somewhere near Ghent, Belgian director Felix van Groeningen also manages to cram in some surprisingly accomplished traditional American music, an immensely funny children's birthday-party scene with screaming six-year-olds cavorting hysterically to pop music and one of the sexiest seductions ever, in which corny country-and-western lyrics allow smitten Didier to voice the words of desire he is thinking while beauty Elise cheers approvingly in consent, visibly turned on. All this and more in your basic boy-meets-girl, boy-and-girl-find-perfect-love, boy-and-girl-face-great-tragedy-together,

perfect-love-cannot-endure-the-pain plotline.

Broken Circle's opening sequence – a seemingly all-American bluegrass quintet wailing out traditional Appalachian harmonies as the opening credits flash unpronounceable Flemish names – immediately declares that any familiar ground will be transformed into unexpected territory. We later return to this same onstage footage to discover that it marks the precise moment when Elise first falls for Didier: that is, exactly when our leading lady first sets desiring eyes on her man, we too catch our initial glimpse of Didier, whose ups and downs will hold us gripped for the next 110 minutes. The film covers fairly tested movie ground: finding a mate, marriage, birth, the tragic illness of a child, break-ups and breakdowns. But *Broken Circle* pounds along with such intensely believable and dramatic peaks and lows that it leaves you gasping by film's end, when dying Elise might – or not? – return miraculously to life.

The film relentlessly swings in spirit, at times soaring to great heights of joy – Didier and Elise finding each other, the birth of beautiful daughter Maybelle, the music and friends they share – only to plummet to depths of sorrow as cancer steals little Maybelle away, or when Elise refuses to take her estranged husband's outstretched hand on stage, which we'd expected as the set's – and the film's – final redemptive

moment. Expert non-chronological editing enhances the film's gruelling rollercoaster feel: for example, a doctor's devastating prognosis suddenly cuts to giddy heights of erotic pleasure seven years earlier, as the couple's once-in-a-lifetime-if-you're-lucky passion is amply consummated. This extreme splicing technique turns mildly incomprehensible in the last third of the film, when familiar overlapping narratives are interrupted by the repeated insertion of unexplained shots, showing an ambulance-bound Elise and a frantic Didier racing behind. These non sequiturs mostly end up serving as warnings for an emotionally exhausted audience, who are given the chance to prepare



The saddest music in the world



Constantly you worry that the movie will collapse under the strain of more raw emotions but it never lapses into the predictable or sentimental

disappointments. As Didier slowly turns more fanatical in his anti-religious intolerance, we grasp Van Groeningen's desire to show how events not only shape our lives but determine our innermost beliefs and very sense of self. Elise's copiously inked body – with partially erased tattoos of past lovers always leaving some trace – becomes a symbol of accumulating emotional scars, forcibly 'surfacing' on her pale skin.

Broken Circle is rife with such borderline hackneyed yet functioning symbolism, such as the innumerable roads, cars, trucks and ambulances perpetually crisscrossing the screen: Didier's pick-up driving away at speed, threatening to take love with it, or desperately racing after a speeding ambulance, literally chasing a dying dream. Slow-moving cars follow a gloomy funeral cortege accompanying a small white casket to its miserable destination, or act as sound-booths-on-wheels for screaming in rage, or as claustrophobic places for steamy impromptu sex. Throughout, automobiles literally drive the story. Another symbolically loaded site is an odd entrance-veranda of glass built on the front of the house – part hothouse, part limbo – that Elise insists be built and Didier grudgingly erects to his own bizarre specifications. Its transparency is able both to kill living things – birds crash into it and die – and unmask Didier's intolerance for his wife's need for some supernatural faith, as she begins to believe that Maybelle is magically returning to her in the form of a crow and, this time, at last, must be protected from death.

Broken Circle is well served by its impressive leads, Veerle Baetens (the standout) and Johan Heldenbergh, who co-wrote the play from which the film is adapted. Baetens's acting

talents are given a real workout: she proves equally convincing first as pure temptation, irresistible in her stars-and-stripes bikini, then as grim-faced mother, absorbing more bad news from her daughter's physician.

Set between 1999 and 2006, *Broken Circle* weirdly depicts a digital-free world; everyone speaks face to face and there is barely a laptop or mobile phone in sight. The story is 'timeless', dramatising basic human experiences explored at least since the Greeks and the narrative could have been adapted to any period. Nonetheless, the film exploits the early 21st-century contrast between the narrow-minded, fundamentalist America of George W. Bush (often seen on TV) and the fantasy-soaked, home-on-the-range US that Didier imagines, where lonesome immigrants invent bluegrass by playing the instruments of home – the Italian with his mandolin, the Jew on his fiddle – resulting in another symbol, this time of dreams versus reality, wished-for harmony versus real-life discord. The scene in which Didier's fury at Bush's Christian myopia explodes turns somewhat over-wordy, contrasting with the film's portrayal of life events eating characters up more inwardly than out. This change in pace late in the film ultimately acts as a welcome relief for viewers, able to refuel emotionally before facing the final slew of misfortunes still left in the tank.

Possibly the only Big Theme absent here is money, which is oddly never mentioned, never a concern for otherwise worry-plagued Elise and Didier. Our world, Van Groeningen seems to say, places excessive emphasis on money – either too much of it or too little – as the root of human troubles. Money's got nothing to do with it: life is, in turns, impossibly beautiful and unbearably painful, by nature. It's as if Van Groeningen has somehow translated a hokey country-and-western ballad, all overheated passion and maudlin heartbreak, into something genuinely sublime: an oddly uplifting yet desperately sad movie. Multiple rounds of strong drink followed by intense all-night conversation are the only worthy aftermath to this mindblowing film. **B**

for the film's announced unhappy ending.

The Broken Circle Breakdown plays like a four-hour epic yet has been condensed into comfortably under two. Constantly you worry that the movie will collapse under the strain of more raw emotions but it rarely falters and never lapses into the predictable or the sentimental. Even quasi-crige-making scenes escape incipient awfulness and turn compelling, such as when fabulous new girlfriend Elise – pure heaven in the sack – reveals that she can sing like Loretta Lynn too, belting out pitch-perfect country to the astonishment of all (movie viewers included). When the distraught and humiliated Didier unexpectedly launches into a lengthy, out-of-the-blue antireligious tirade at the close of the group's fanciest ever gig, we join everybody on screen as they watch his public breakdown aghast, uncomfortably sharing the embarrassment of Elise and the band. When the dying Maybelle imagines a star as the shining soul of a dead bird she'd found earlier, the focus diverts away from the little girl's made-for-TV-style hopefulness and turns instead to Didier's struggle to comfort his daughter without betraying his deep mistrust of any such 'spiritual' conjectures. He fails, and when, despite dad's loving attempts to help her, Maybelle runs away in disgust, still clutching her bird and her fantasy, we get the message: *Broken Circle* is never going to sugar-coat life's

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Dirk Impens
Screenplay
Carl Joos
Felix van Groeningen
With the collaboration
of Charlotte
Vandermeersch
Based upon
*The Broken Circle
Breakdown* featuring
the Cover-ups of
Alabama by Johan
Heldenbergh and
Mieke Dobbels
**Director of
Photography**
Ruben Impens
Editing
Nico Leunen
Art Direction
Kurt Rigolle
Music
Björn Eriksson
Sound
Jan Deca
Costume Design
Ann Lauwerys

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VTM, Belgacom,
Tax Shelter of the
Federal Government
of Belgium, Casa
Kafka Pictures,
Casa Kafka Pictures
Movie Tax Shelter
empowered by Belfius
A Felix van
Groeningen film

Cast
Johan Heldenbergh
Didier Bontinck,
'Monroe'
Veerle Baetens
Elise Vandeveld,
'Alabama'
Nell Cattrysse
Maybelle
Geert Van
Rampelberg
William
Nils de Caster
Jock
Robby Cleiren
Jimmy
Bert Huysentruyt

Jef
Jan Bijvoet
Koën

**Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles**

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited
10,057 ft +8 frames

Ghent, Belgium, 2006. Six-year-old Maybelle is dying of cancer; parents Elise and Didier are distraught.

Seven years earlier. Bluegrass-loving Didier, who lives in a caravan, meets Elise, who works in a tattoo parlour. They fall in love. Elise grows fond of his bluegrass music, later singing lead in his band. She unexpectedly announces that she is pregnant; at first unhappily surprised, Didier soon begins refurbishing a real home for the family. They marry, baby Maybelle arrives and they are happy. But when Maybelle is diagnosed with cancer, Elise and Didier's lives revolve around hospital visits and attempted cures. Maybelle dies. Friends and family rally round the grief-stricken couple but Elise is inconsolable. When Didier tries to help, she makes unjust accusations and they argue. Afterwards, even as they attempt to mend their lives, Elise grows remote, and Didier more frustrated. Eventually Elise leaves.

Visiting Elise at work to try to woo her back, Didier discovers that she has changed her name to 'Alabama' – a change he mocks. At their band's gig later that week, she renames him – at his request – 'Monroe', after his favourite musician. She sings sadly; he offers her his hand but she refuses. At the end of the gig, Didier explodes into a bizarre antireligious tirade. Elise/Alabama runs off. Searching for her late that night, Didier finds her dying from a suicidal overdose. He rushes her to hospital but it seems too late. As the band sing by her bedside, we see her most recent tattoo: 'Alabama Monroe'.

Captain Phillips

USA 2013

Director: Paul Greengrass

Certificate 12A 133m 53s



Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

In a recent review of Danish director Tobias Lindholm's deft Somali piracy drama *A Hijacking*, Salon's Andrew O'Hehir declared that "no mainstream American thriller could ever be made about this subject that resisted simple-minded narrative clichés the way [the film] does, or that refused to depict its characters as either heroes or villains." Credit then, to Paul Greengrass's *Captain Phillips*, which proves an estimable, swift-arriving rejoinder. Admittedly, it can't match the invention and offbeat POV of Lindholm's film, a fictional composite of several true incidents that reflected on the notion of human lives as just more business commodities to be negotiated over. But as a forthright blow-by-blow account of one very high-profile real-life calamity, *Captain Phillips* far from indulges any Manichean them-and-us crudities, gradually becoming an engrossing study of two men on either side of a siege and how they respectively deal with a high-pressure situation. It also, after the cumbersome Iraq whistleblowing thriller *Green Zone* (2010), fits Greengrass like a glove, reaffirming his mastery of vivid, rigorous crisis reconstruction.

The film dramatises the 2009 hijacking by four Somali pirates of the MV Maersk Alabama, a US cargo hauler bound for Mombasa via the risky waters around the Horn of Africa. The incident culminated in Richard Phillips, the Alabama's captain, being held hostage for several days in a tiny covered lifeboat after a standoff between pirates and the ship's crew, the ultimate intention being to hold Phillips for ransom in Somalia. Finally, following mostly fruitless negotiations, three of the pirates were killed by Navy marksmen – an order signed off by the president – after Phillips's life was judged to be in immediate peril. Billy Ray's screenplay hews close to Phillips's own recollections of his ordeal in his book *A Captain's Duty*, albeit with some dramatic compression – in reality the pirate operation was much larger in scale, encompassing multiple hostages on various boats, but keeping the focus narrow pays dividends here.

The preamble to the hijacking wryly – if sometimes a little heavyhandedly – juxtaposes preparations on both sides of the divide. En route from Vermont to the flight that will take him to his fated assignment, Tom Hanks's Captain Phillips complains to wife Andrea (Catherine Keener) about the rapidity of change in his industry and frets over the employment prospects for his graduate son: "You gotta be strong to survive out there." Almost immediately, Greengrass cuts to Somalia, where wiry youth Muse (charismatic newcomer Barkhad Abdi) is overseeing a scrum of potential candidates, all teenagers, for the upcoming ambush ("This is no game for the weak"). After some artful aerial shots of massed multicoloured shipping containers that make one of Oman's ports look like a giant Tetris game, we see Phillips join his crew aboard the Alabama, where he has to calm some dissent among the ranks. Asked to perform extra security drills after a piracy alert is issued, one union stalwart argues that he isn't paid enough to fight pirates, while an engineer bemoans the lack of armed protection afforded them. Again,



Captain sensible: Tom Hanks as Captain Phillips

A forthright, blow-by-blow account of a high-profile real-life calamity, Greengrass's film avoids Manichean us-and-them crudities



Shock waves

correlations are made when Greengrass switches to the pirates on their flimsy skiff. Muse has to enforce discipline when squabbling erupts over the operation's questionable ratio of risk to reward. Ultimately everyone – American and Somali – stays put; in uncertain times, a job's a job, even with the attendant dangers.

Where Lindholm's film eschewed depicting the hijacking itself, Greengrass stages it with customary hectic dynamism. Barry Ackroyd's widescreen framing makes the most of the absurd sight of the miniature skiff speeding towards the colossal freighter, its passengers nervous and wired on khat. There's a perverse sense of admiration, as well as apprehension, that the pirates succeed in boarding the ship at all, despite the Alabama's impromptu defence measures – swerving to generate wave swells and detonating flares. A quick improviser, Phillips orders most of his crew to hide below deck and disables the ship's controls – plays that bamboozle and infuriate the intruders instantly. A tense battle of wits ensues between two elect individuals, one inexperienced and barely out of adolescence, the other a veteran approaching late middle age. While Muse tries to grasp to what extent the captain – whom he nicknames 'Trish' after discerning his heritage – is bluffing and stalling, Phillips is estimating



Once the action switches from the spacious Alabama to the cramped confines of the lifeboat – almost a literal pressure cooker, having no ventilation – Greengrass turns the screw, shooting in tight close-ups as nerves fray and tempers flare. The director's knack for illustrating high-wire procedure and the rapid relay of intelligence – deployed to such exhilarating effect in his two Jason Bourne movies – also comes to the fore as news of the situation filters out (you have to wonder what he'd make of the Bourne-esque shenanigans of the Edward Snowden saga). A lesser film might have resorted to frequent cutaways of Phillips's loved ones tearfully watching the whole thing play out on TV. No such clichés are admitted here, although as a result Keener is relegated to the rank of bit player. Greengrass merely stays in the eye of the storm, and the momentum never lets up. When the cavalry arrives on the scene in the form of warships and Navy SEALs, another guessing game ensues, this time between pirates and hostage negotiators. As impossible demands are made and rescue strategies are thrashed out, there's something of an ocean-bound *Dog Day Afternoon* feel to proceedings, with Najee the volatile, violent John Cazale to Muse's increasingly weary and resigned Al Pacino.

There's certainly no triumphalism on show in the sudden, ugly resolution to the stalemate. Hanks's carefully controlled performance comes into its own in these last stages, his Phillips having transformed little by little from terse, contained pragmatist into emotional wreck. The actor has rarely been better than in one brief but wrenching scene that has the shell-shocked captain struggling to pull himself together while being examined by Navy medics. It's a reminder, as the restless camera finally comes to pause on the bloodied, frazzled hostage and the film takes a long breath after the puffing and panting of the previous two hours, that Greengrass – despite the cool precision and clinical attack of his *vérité* – is foremost a chronicler of overwhelmingly visceral experience. **S**

how much he and the hidden crew can get away with before the pirates resort to violence.

If the film's representation of the pirates isn't hugely nuanced, neither is it black-and-white. We've already seen from Greengrass's previous fact-based dramas – *Bloody Sunday* (2002) and, especially, *United 93* (2006) – that he's interested in how a catastrophe affects everyone involved, whether they're Belfast marchers or British soldiers, jihadists or stricken air travellers. The only real monotonous note is sounded by Faysal Ahmed's wild-eyed hothead Najee, a figure signalled as bad news from the early Somalia-set scenes when Muse is warned against selecting him because "he comes from another village". Without being explicit, Ray's script touches on the geopolitical ripples that have allowed modern-day piracy to flourish: when Phillips wonders why his captors couldn't just stick to being fishermen, they retort that there's nothing left to catch because of overfishing by giant boats like the Alabama. Grave references are made to unforgiving gangster bosses back at home who won't accept the relatively paltry amount of money held on board the American ship; ransoming its captain will prove far more lucrative. Phillips insists that Muse could have chosen a different way of life, to which the younger man responds sourly: "Maybe in America."

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Scott Rudin
Dana Brunetti
Michael De Luca
Screenplay
Billy Ray
Based upon the book *A Captain's Duty: Somali Pirates, Navy SEALs and Dangerous Days at Sea* by Richard Phillips with Stephan Talty
Director of Photography

Barry Ackroyd
Editor
Christopher Rouse
Production Designer
Paul Kirby
Music
Henry Jackman
Production Mixers
Chris Munro
Tim Fraser
Costume Designer
Mark Bridges

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Production Companies
Columbia Pictures presents
A Scott Rudin, Michael De Luca, Trigger Street production
Executive Producers
Gregory Goodman
Eli Bush
Kevin Spacey

Cast
Tom Hanks
Captain Richard Phillips
Barkhad Abdi
Muse
Barkhad Abdirahman
Bilal
Faysal Ahmed
Najee
Mahat M. Ali
Elmi
Michael Chernus
Shane Murphy
Corey Johnson

Ken Quinn
Max Martini
SEAL commander
Chris Mulkey
John Cronan
Yul Vazquez
Captain Frank Castellano
David Warshofsky
Mike Perry
Catherine Keener
Andrea Phillips

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing

12,049ft +8 frames

In 2009, Captain Richard Phillips reports for duty aboard the MV Maersk Alabama, an American cargo ship bound for Mombasa, Kenya. Shortly after embarking, Phillips receives alerts concerning the threat posed by Somali pirates on their route. When the Alabama is boarded by four pirates, Phillips disables the ship's systems and instructs most of the crew to hide in the engine room. Frustrated by the modest sum of money held on board, the pirates' leader Muse instead demands control of the ship. Phillips counters by claiming that the ship is immobile due to engine failure. When Muse threatens the lives of the remaining bridge crew, Phillips relents and agrees to help the pirates find the missing engineers. The pirates' suspicions grow when one is injured by a booby trap

set by the men in hiding. With Phillips held at gunpoint on the bridge, Muse proceeds below deck alone and is overpowered by the concealed crew. An agreement is made whereby Muse will be traded for Phillips, but once Muse is freed the pirates renege on the deal. They abscond in the ship's lifeboat with Phillips, intending to hold him for ransom in Somalia. Navy warships Bainbridge and Halyburton shadow the lifeboat and attempt negotiations with the pirates. Phillips attempts escape but is recaptured. Negotiators trick Muse into boarding the Bainbridge by claiming that his village elders are being held there. The remaining pirates prepare to execute Phillips but are killed by Navy marksmen. Phillips is rescued unscathed and Muse is taken into custody.



Moving forward: Paulina García's *Gloria* is humane, energetic and willing to try anything from bungee jumping to marijuana

Gloria

Director: Sebastián Lelio
Certificate 15 109m 11s



Reviewed by Maria Delgado

The first time the viewer sees Paulina García's Gloria at the bar of a crowded nightclub for middle-aged singles, the sound of Frecuencia Mod's upbeat 'Duele, duele tu amor' ('Your Love Hurts') rings out. With a glass of pisco sour in her hand and her arm positioned confidently on the bar, she casts her eye around the room and then swings purposefully across the dance floor to introduce herself to a potential new partner as Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love' resonates across the room. The sonic commentary offered by the two opening numbers sets the scene for Sebastián Lelio's perceptive and entertaining study of a feisty, free-spirited 58-year-old divorcee, putting aside the pain of past relationships in her search for passion, companionship and a partner who shares her zeal for dance.

Gloria's early scenes are framed against a series of torch-song numbers that both comment on the action and complement the snippets of exposition revealed by Gloria's encounters and conversations. Divorced for over a decade, she lives in a small apartment where she suffers upstairs neighbours – it is never clear if it is a

single disturbed neighbour or a warring couple – arguing noisily late into the night. She leaves buoyant messages for her grown-up daughter Ana (Fabiola Zamora) and son Pedro (Diego Fontecilla), reminding them to call her – the implication being that she hears from them less than she would like. Gloria is single and lonely but refuses to give up. She croons along in the car to Massiel's 'Eres' ('You Are') as she drives to work. The lyrics – "You are the response I couldn't find in my silence... You are my king" – point to the traditional relationship model she's searching for. The plethora of songs and music that underscore the film's action, from the melancholy of Bach's Partita in D minor for solo violin to Paloma San Basilio's 'Libre', position Gloria's adventures within a litany of tales of emotional survival in the aftermath of romantic heartbreak.

Gloria is surrounded by a number of less than perfect relationships. "Are you going to tell me what to do?" thunders one of her neighbours to the other, ominously. Her son Pedro responds in an acerbic tone to the absent mother of his small child when she rings home. Her ex-husband Gabriel (Alejandro Goic) evidently has a strained relationship with his daughter – he is the last to know that she is expecting her Swedish boyfriend's baby. And yet the film seems to suggest that Gloria's family dynamics are no more problematic than those experienced by other characters in

the film. The recently divorced Rodolfo (Sergio Hernández), the retired naval officer Gloria begins a relationship with, has two grown-up daughters who appear utterly dependent on him. When Gloria brings him along to meet her family at Pedro's birthday dinner, Rodolfo sheepishly reveals that his daughters never graduated, have no employment and still live at home. Indeed, on many levels Gloria enjoys a good relationship with her children: she visits her son and helps with his sick baby; and when she drives Ana to Santiago airport to catch a plane to join her boyfriend in Sweden, Ana appears genuinely distraught at parting from her.

The film's pulse comes in many ways from García's brave and beautiful central performance. She dominates the movie from the very beginning as the camera picks her out in the swarming disco. She is present in every frame and Lelio shapes the film to ensure that the viewer is given the sense of entering her world, sharing the front seat of her car as she drives to work and the intimacy of her lovemaking scenes with Rodolfo. Her large round glasses frame slanting, expressive eyes and heavy lids noticeably dressed up with eye shadow; her flicked-back hair has something of a 1970s feel. García exudes the humanity of Carmen Maura's genial Pepa in Almodóvar's *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988), with the sexual energy of Diane Keaton's Theresa Dunn in Richard Brooks's *Looking for*



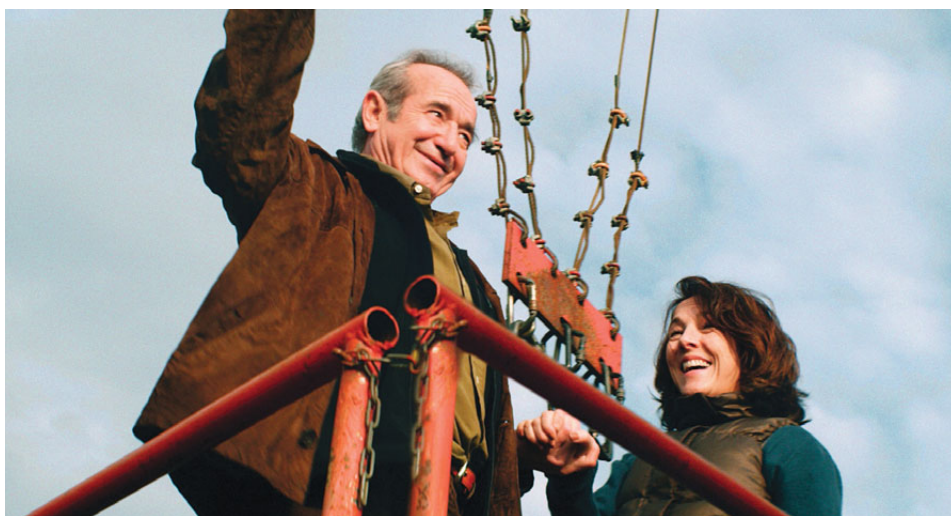
Anchored in Paulina García's brave and beautiful central performance, the film is both a compelling character study and a wider contemplation of the state of the Chilean nation

Mr Goodbar (1977). Her positive outlook and willingness to try anything – including bungee jumping and marijuana – generate Rodolfo's pick-up line: "Are you always this happy?"

Gloria and Rodolfo's sexual encounters are marked by the sight of flabby flesh and the sounds of slobbering kisses and heavy breathing. *Gloria* is a film about ageing and the management of change: Rodolfo has had a gastric bypass to deal with obesity but can't handle his sagging waistline. He constricts himself within a girdle – a potent metaphor for his own emotional imprisonment – which Gloria rips off with a glorious sense of purpose. Gloria herself is diagnosed with glaucoma and must take action to avoid going blind.


The film's strength is that it operates both as a compelling character study of an alluring, humane protagonist whose fragility and resourcefulness sit side by side, and as a wider contemplation of the state of the nation, without the latter dimension ever appearing forced or imposed. There are scenes of protests on the TV as Gloria chats on the telephone at home, testifying to the wider turmoil besetting Santiago; she is framed by crowds of protesters carrying placards as she leaves a city café; and at a dinner party she bemoans the cost of medical treatment while her friend describes Chile as a ghost nation. Like Gloria and Rodolfo, the country is managing transition, from the lasting infrastructures of a dying dictatorship to a more pliable democratic model. But whereas Gloria is determined to move forward and let her children live their own lives, Rodolfo is trapped by a past that he can't (and perhaps doesn't even want to) let go. The fact that his adult daughters rely on him financially and emotionally is perhaps a comment on a generation who grew up in the shadow of a dictatorship that would not let them make decisions for themselves. Rodolfo seems content to let this culture of dependency continue, to the detriment of his relationship with Gloria.

Hernández imbues Rodolfo with childish attributes: pleading eyes, overblown declarations of devotion, a petulant inability to deal with not being the centre of attention. He takes Gloria paintballing on their first date. "Men like to play war," he informs her in a telling indictment of the macho culture that spawned and cocooned the Pinochet regime. The disclosure of Rodolfo's military past leads to an awkward silence at Pedro's birthday dinner. "Who is this man?" asks Ana after his embarrassing silent departure.



Painting the town red: Sergio Hernández and Paulina García

There is an admirable visual economy to *Gloria*. The central protagonist's emotional state emerges not only through the music, which works, the director has said, "almost like a Greek chorus", but also through image association: a dancing skeleton in a shopping arcade embodies both Gloria's sense of mortality and her lissom energy; the use of Mahler's Adagietto from his Fifth Symphony as she sits at the hairdressers with her hair sculpted in tight curls suggests a parallel with the ageing Aschenbach in Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971).

At the end of the film, Gloria embarks on a spring clean, hoovering her car (and by association her life) of unnecessary clutter. She returns Rodolfo's paintballing guns with a flourish: dressed in black dress, heels and a red sequined bolero jacket, she fires green paint across both Rodolfo and his house while his overweight daughters rush like giant toddlers to his aid – a playful reference to *Women on the Verge*. In the final sequence she styles her hair in the mirror, cigarette in mouth, creating a new look for herself. Singing along to Umberto Tozzi's 'Gloria' at a wedding party, she refuses an invitation to dance and subsequently takes to the floor at her own rhythm. Her style is all her own: passionate, fearless, determined and, like Lelio's film, eloquently uplifting. 

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Juan de Dios Larrain Pablo Larrain Sebastián Lelio Gonzalo Maza	Production Companies Fabula, Nephilim Producciones	Alejandro Goic Gabriel
Written by Sebastián Lelio Gonzalo Maza	Executive Producers Juan Ignacio Correa Mariane Hartard Rocio Jadue	Liliana García Flavia
Director of Photography Benjamin Echazarreta	Cast Paulina García Gloria Cumpido Sergio Hernández Rodolfo Fernández Diego Foncilla Pedro	Antonia Santa Maria
Editors Sebastián Lelio Soledad Salfate	Fabiola Zamora Ana	Maria Luz Jiménez
Production Designer Marcela Urivi	Costume Designer Eduardo Castro	Nana Marcial Tagle Marcial
Sound David Matecón		Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles
		Distributor Network Releasing
		9,826ft +8 frames

Santiago, Chile, the present. Divorcee Gloria returns home after a night at a singles' club. She removes the cat belonging to her arguing upstairs neighbour from her flat and takes off her makeup. In the days that follow she visits her son Pedro and baby grandson. She attends a yoga class run by her daughter Ana and meets the latter's new boyfriend. On a further visit to the singles' disco, she meets the recently divorced Rodolfo. They begin a relationship. He takes her paintballing on their first date. Rodolfo's grown-up daughters ring him incessantly, which causes tension with Gloria. Rodolfo meets Gloria's family at a dinner party for her son's birthday; he annoys her by leaving without saying goodbye. She doesn't answer his calls for a while but then decides to give him a second chance. They go away for a romantic weekend by the sea but when Rodolfo receives news that his ex-wife has had an accident, he leaves Gloria at dinner and runs back home. Gloria spends the evening at the casino and has a one-night stand with a man she meets, Marcial. She wakes up alone on the beach the next morning, returns to the hotel and calls her housekeeper, who comes to fetch her. The neighbour's cat is in the flat but Gloria does not ask for it to be removed. She returns Rodolfo's paintball guns to him, covering him and his house in paint in the process. At a wedding party, she dances to Umberto Tozzi's song 'Gloria'.



Odd couple: Judi Dench as Philomena Lee and Steve Coogan as Martin Sixsmith

Philomena

United Kingdom/USA/France 2013

Director: Stephen Frears

Certificate 12A 97m 40s



Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"Evil's good – story-wise, I mean," comments cynical ex-journalist Martin Sixsmith (Steve Coogan), eliciting surprised looks from elderly Irishwoman Philomena Lee (Judi Dench) and her daughter Jane (Anna Maxwell Martin). But he's right, of course. Perhaps the most chillingly effective moment in a film that otherwise keeps its mix of comedy and drama judiciously well balanced comes towards the end, when Martin confronts the one person who could have reunited a dying man with the mother who lost him 50 years before. The aged Sister Hildegard (Barbara Jefford), who had been in charge of the Roscrea convent when Philomena was incarcerated there and when her three-year-old son was whisked away to be sold off to an American family, shows not the least trace of contrition, let alone compassion, when Martin accuses her of heartless cruelty. "I have kept my own vow of chastity," she states with icy complacency, adding that a teenage girl who allowed herself to get pregnant outside marriage deserved all the suffering that was coming to her.

We've already seen a younger Hildegard in a flashback, callously telling the teenage Philomena (Sophie Kennedy Clark, well cast as the youthful Dench), "You are the cause of this shame, you and your indecency," and refusing to allow her painkillers during the agony of a breech birth. So it probably shouldn't come as a shock that this Sister of Mercy (the irony needs no underlining) has preserved her venomous



Out of the past

sense of superior virtue for nearly half a century. But it's a scene that, in terms of emotional impact, recalls the most harrowing incidents in Peter Mullan's *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002), which covers a stretch of the same real-life territory.

For most of its length, though, Stephen Frears's film leavens the tragedy of Philomena's story with a generous helping of mismatched-couple comedy. Dench, deploying a pitch-perfect Irish accent (for which she credits the Irish side of her family), plays Philomena with bright-eyed, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle-ish charm, innocently delighted by finding a chocolate on the pillow of her smart Washington DC hotel and being offered free Buck's Fizz in business class. ("You have to pay for everything on Ryanair," she tells Martin.) Her naive pleasure is played off against Martin's jaded sophistication as he embarks on something he contemptuously refers to as "a human-interest story... for weak-minded, ignorant people", initially seeing it as no more than a potentially lucrative source of income. Subjected by Philomena to a detailed recounting of the plot of a Mills & Boon novel she's just read, he reports back to his wife that his travelling companion reveals what "a lifetime of romance novels, the *Reader's Digest* and the *Daily Mail* can do to the human brain".

But *Philomena*, though naive in many regards, is neither stupid nor ignorant. When on the

transatlantic flight an ex-colleague of Martin's strolls in from the first-class cabin to deliver a few barbed putdowns, Philomena remarks as he departs, "Just because you're in first class it doesn't mean you're a first-class person," adding for good measure, "I think he needs a good swipe of shite." She's not in the least disconcerted to learn that Anthony, the son she last saw aged three, was gay, merely wondering whether he might have been "bi-curious"; and, recalling the blissful fairground tryst that led to her pregnancy, notes that "until then I didn't even know I had a clitoris".

It's a convention of films like this (*Rain Man*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* and the like) that the supposedly more sophisticated and intelligent person will learn a few life-lessons from their seemingly more simple-minded companion. *Philomena* is no exception, though the script (by Coogan and Jeff Pope, adapted from Sixsmith's 2009 non-fiction book *The Lost Child of Philomena Lee*) thankfully never descends into the glutinous depths of full-on *Forrest Gump*-ery. After a tirade by the atheist Martin against the cruelty of her religion, concluding with "I wonder what your God would say to that?", Philomena retorts tartly as she heads into church, "I think he'd say you were a fucking ejjit." She proves a lot more effective than the trained journalist at doorstepping Anthony's recalcitrant lover Pete (Peter Hermann). And when Martin remonstrates with her, asking how she could bring herself to forgive Hildegard, she responds: "It's up to me what I do about it. I don't want to hate people – I don't want to be like you."

Not that the Catholic Church and its pieties get an easy ride; its representatives, and the lasting effects of their abuse, are painted in the most sombre of hues. Even after 50 years, Philomena is still tormented by guilt about her teenage affair ("What made it much worse was that I enjoyed it") and struggling with her moral quandary ("What I'd done was a sin, but keeping it all hidden away was a sin"). Only moments after telling Martin he's "a fucking ejjit", we see her face through the grille of the



Naivety meets sophistication

confessional, streaming with tears, unable to utter a word, still racked by the nuns' implacable verdict that she brought her suffering on herself and fully deserves all the pain of it. The sole time we're shown a more compassionate side of the church is when a young nun, risking the wrath of her superiors, gives Philomena a photograph of Anthony that she's secretly taken.

Frears's film leavens the tragic story of the forced adoption of a teenage mother's child with a generous helping of mismatched-couple comedy

Dench, as we've come to expect, gives a flawless performance, hinting at the shrewdness underlying Philomena's faith and conveying her long-suppressed grief without ever becoming maudlin. Coogan selflessly concedes her most of the best lines, holding back on the mugging with a restraint (aided, apparently, by the presence of the real Martin Sixsmith on set) that, following on from his role in *What Maisie Knew*, suggests he may be carving out a second career as a serious actor. Even so, he provides some cherishable reaction shots, not least his fastidious bemusement when Philomena treats Martin to his first experience of a Harvester. ("I love these little bits of toast," she enthuses, helping herself lavishly to croissants from the free salad bar.) In the Washington hotel, though, it's she who suffers culture shock, worrying that her son may turn out to be obese. Martin wonders why she would think that. "Because of the size of the portions," she explains, wide-eyed with amazement.

Traditionally, mismatched-couple road movies (or flight movies, in this case) must end in reconciliation and mutual regard and here again *Philomena* conforms to type. Martin, his cynicism eroded by Philomena's unquestioning faith and determination to think the best of people, offers to suppress the story; she, despite her loyalty to her church, insists he must go ahead and publish: "People should know what happened here."

Stephen Frears, always among the most pared-down and least obtrusive of directors, offers a quiet masterclass in when to use and when to withhold plot points. At several junctures we're shown home-movie shots of Anthony at various stages of his life, dropped in unexplained as if these are Philomena's mental images of what became of her son. Only towards the end of the film do we see that it's footage being shown to Philomena and Martin by Pete after they've managed to gain entrance to his house. Watching it, the two people who best loved Anthony are able to round out his story between them before the revelation of the final shots back at Roscrea. The scene neatly sums up a film that, for all its comedy and its message of reconciliation, retains a burning sense of anger at its heart. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Gabrielle Tana

Steve Coogan

Tracey Seaward

Screenplay

Steve Coogan

Jeff Pope

Based on the book

The Lost Child of

Philomena Lee by

Martin Sixsmith

Director of

Photography

Robbie Ryan

Film Editor

Valerio Bonelli

Production Designer

Alan MacDonald

Music

Alexandre Desplat

Production

Sound Mixer

Peter Lindsay

Costume Designer

Consolata Boyle

the participation of

Canal+ and Ciné+ a

Baby Cow/Magnolia

Mae production

A film by Stephen

Frears

Developed by

BBC Films

A Baby Cow/Magnolia

Mae production for

Pathé, BBC Films and

British Film Institute

Made with the

support of BFI's

Film Fund

Executive Producers

Henry Normal

François Vernel

Cameron McCracken

Christine Langan

Carolyn Marks

Blackwood

Film Extracts

Big Momma's

House (2000)

Martin

Jane

Mare Winningham

Mary

Sophie Kennedy

Clark

young Philomena

Ruth McCabe

Mother Barbara

Peter Hermann

Pete Olsson

Sean Mahon

Michael

Wunmi Mosaku

young nun

Amy McAllister

Sister Anunciata

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Pathé Productions

8,790 ft +0 frames

London, 2003. Martin Sixsmith, an ex-journalist recently sacked as spin-doctor to Prime Minister Tony Blair, is introduced to elderly Irishwoman Philomena Lee. In 1952, the teenage Philomena became pregnant; disowned by her family, she was sent to a convent in Roscrea, County Tipperary, where she gave birth to a boy, Anthony, and was put to work unpaid in the convent laundry. When Anthony was three he was taken for adoption against Philomena's will. Now, 50 years later, she wants to find him, and asks Martin's help. Planning to write the story and sell it, Martin goes to Ireland with Philomena. At Roscrea, Sister Claire tells them that all the records have been accidentally burnt. In a local pub, however, Martin is told that the nuns sold babies to American families for £1,000 each.

Martin and Philomena fly to Washington DC to examine the adoption records, which show that Anthony became Michael Hess; he was a senior legal counsel to the Republicans and died in 1995. From his friend Marcia they learn that he was gay and died of Aids. They meet his lover, Pete Olsson, who shows them home-movie footage of Anthony, revealing that shortly before his death he visited Roscrea and is now buried there. Back at the convent, Martin confronts the aged Sister Hildegard, who headed the convent when Philomena was there; she knew Michael Hess was Anthony but told him that his mother had no interest in meeting him. Martin denounces her for her cruelty but she's adamant and Philomena forgives her. As they stand at Anthony's grave, Martin says he won't publish the story but Philomena tells him it should be told.

©Philomena Lee Limited, Pathé Productions, British Film Institute and British Broadcasting Corporation
Production Companies
Pathé, BBC Films and BFI present with

Cast

Judi Dench

Philomena Lee

Steve Coogan

Martin Sixsmith

Michelle Fairley

Sally Mitchell

Barbara Jefford

Sister Hildegard

Anna Maxwell

The Blueblack Hussar

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Jack Bond

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Adam Ant was one of the quintessential icons of 80s pop, and his recent effort to revive his career after years out of the spotlight obviously lends itself to a certain strain of music-doc formula. Film the artist laying down their latest tracks so we can see them competing with their younger self, thread that through a potted history filled out with archive clips, plonk said performer down for some serious talking-head confessional time and that BBC Four slot is as good as yours.

What's truly admirable about Jack Bond's intimate portrait of a clearly vulnerable individual (whose struggles with bipolar disorder are hinted at but never exploited by the film) is that it does almost none of those things, instead patiently observing the man in his natural environment of sweaty club and recording studio, then leaving the viewer to make the judgements about his current state of musical and personal wellbeing.

As such *The Blueblack Hussar* evidently runs the risk of disappointing those expecting a sit-down tell-all session or a serious helping of 'Prince Charming' VHS nostalgia. But while eschewing contextualising interviews or voiceover the film still cannily highlights certain themes, implicitly pondering whether the manic determination that fuelled Adam Ant's drive to stardom and sustains his current resurgence may be inextricably linked with the consuming demons that saw him sectioned back in 2003. Bond himself is a greying, patrician onscreen presence, but we never see him button-holing his subject with



Prince Charming: Adam Ant

any sort of journalistic ruthlessness to dish the dirt, instead hanging back and observing, so that those brief moments when the troubled singer does open up – bemoaning the fact that he ran himself into the ground paying for record-company execs' terrible suits and lavish houses – feel as if they're truly earned.

What's particularly astute about Bond's approach is that it never flags up the moments when the singer's volatile temperament shows itself, prompting the viewer to remain attentive, drawn in by Adam Ant's wry humour and impressively wide frame of cultural reference (from X-Ray Spex to Meissen porcelain and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi), until a too-maniac burst of enthusiasm, a disarmingly sharp turn of phrase or going AWOL after heading off for cigarettes hints that all is not quite serene beneath the surface. It certainly allows us to sense the sheer insidiousness of mental illness, but never at the expense of betraying the trust of this still-charismatic live performer, a man who clearly feels that his artful punk-era output has never quite got the cultural respect it deserves.

The undercurrent, though, is that this is as much a comeback for Bond as it is for Adam Ant. Bond's 1970s avant-garde collaborations with the late Jane Arden have now happily been revived on disc by the BFI, yet subsequent arts docs for TV's *The South Bank Show* and video collaborations with the Pet Shop Boys (including 1987's feature-length *It Couldn't Happen Here*, an exercise in curdled nostalgia greeted with near-incomprehension at the time) remain his highest-profile offerings since then. The new film is guilty of dropping in occasional staged-looking big-name encounters (at home with artist Allen Jones, a smiley Charlotte Rampling in a Paris studio) which don't quite fit with the *vérité* footage elsewhere, but overall it's done with telling grace and sympathy, leaving us suffused with hope that the next chapter for subject and filmmaker alike will turn out positively. ☺

Camp 14 Total Control Zone

Director: Marc Wiese
Certificate 12A 105m 30s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"I sit in the room without thoughts and without really doing anything. This quietude helps me kill time. I don't really want to think about anything."

The speaker is Shin Donghyuk, one of very few people to have escaped a North Korean death camp, making the tale that he has lived to tell of crucial importance to the South Korean government and to human-rights organisations – and of considerable curiosity value for the world's press (whose overtures Shin politely refuses). Shin is a quiet and quietly traumatised man, living simply in a Seoul apartment whose lack of furnishings he seems to have modelled (as a sort of home away from home) on his altogether less comfortable accommodation in Camp 14. He was born there in 1983, and for the next 23 years of his life knew only suffering and starvation, beatings and torture, forced labour and total obedience (on pain of public execution), with the outside world, not to mention normal familial/social relations, always on the other side of the electrified fence.

German documentarian Marc Wiese (*Das Mädchen und das Foto, Kanun – The Law of Honour*) turns his subject's quietude into a filmmaking principle. Much as Shin narrates his experiences in calm, measured tones, marking his continuing anguish not with on-camera breakdowns or emotive gestures but rather with long silences and awkward expressions of discomfort, so too *Camp 14: Total Control Zone* adopts a hushed approach, letting Shin's

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Axel Engstfeld	Companies Engstfeld Film in co-production with BR, WDR in association with ARTE	Kaleidoscope Film Distribution
Written by Marc Wiese		9,495 ft +0 frames
Director of Photography Jörg Adams	Supported with funds from the Film und Medien Stiftung NRW, FFA, Deutscher Filmförderfonds	
Editor Jean-Marc Lesguillons		
Sound Editor Tim Elzer		
Animation Ali Soozandeh	In Colour [1.78:1]	
	Part-subtitled	
Production ©[TBC]	Distributor	

A documentary in which Shin Donghyuk relates his life story. He was born in 1983 in Camp 14, a North Korean death camp, to parents married by a guard as a reward for the father's good labour, and his first memory is of a visit with his mother to a public execution. From the age of six he was put to work in the coal mines. At 14 he informed on his own mother and brother for discussing escape, and was tortured for the next seven months in the camp prison, leaving him permanently scarred and crippled. Thereafter he was taken with his father to the public execution of his mother and brother.

Aged 23, Shin escaped from the camp with an older man (the latter dying in the attempt). He made his way across the border first to China and eventually to South Korea for weeks of debriefing followed by integration into a society that he still finds alienating. He is now a member of LiNK (Liberty in North Korea), and tells his stories at human-rights conferences around the world.

The film also includes interviews with Hyuk Kwon, a former guard commander from Camp 22, and Oh Yangnam, a former agent for North Korea's secret police.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Jack Bond	Joanna Appis	Film Extracts <i>Il portiere di notte/The Night Porter</i> (1973) <i>Jubilee</i> (1977)
Mary Rose Storey	Production Sound Roger Johnson	
Camera Operators Mary Rose Storey	Rowan October	
Peter Sinclair	©Sunrise Pictures	
Luke Oliver	Production Companies	
Ross Fall	Sunrise Pictures	
Haider Zafar	present a Jack	
Carl Macadam	Bond film	
Rowan October	Executive Producers	
Sharaz Ali	Jamie Reynolds	
Trevor Hargreaves	Alan McQueen	
Film Editors	Eddie Harrison	
Gabriela Miranda-Rodriguez		

London, 2011. Musician Adam Ant is filmed during a series of gigs as he tries to rebuild his profile, the million-selling pop star of the 1980s having been out of the spotlight since well-publicised mental-health issues saw him sectioned in 2003. Performing in a Victorian hussar jacket in keeping with the historical dandyism often informing his public image, he's aware of his influence on subsequent generations of performers (including Amy Winehouse collaborator Mark Ronson and the Klaxons' Jamie Reynolds, with whom we see him briefly hanging out) but seemingly resigned to the hard graft of playing to small audiences for little reward. A jaunt to Paris brings a studio visit from Charlotte Rampling, plus a shopping spree for vinyl and bric-a-brac. He suggests that the demands of sustaining a run of hit records caused his career to implode at the end of the 1980s, yet as his resurgence gathers pace, reaching larger audiences, he only occasionally shows signs of strain. As he steps out on stage to play to 55,000 people at a summer festival in Hyde Park, his career prospects look more positive, even if his mental-health issues remain unresolved.



Beyond the walls: Shin Donghyuk

words speak for themselves and allowing their full impact to hit in the breathing spaces of his drawn-out pauses. There is no music in the film's mix, although muted tones of wind and rain can at times be heard, conjuring up the sounds of the camp without anything that approaches sensationalism. Similarly, Ali Soozandeh's plain animated sequences of the camp are painted in subdued browns and greys, subtly evoking an oppressive atmosphere without actually showing any abuse.

It is this very understatement, and the weight given to Shin's words over any accompanying sound or image, that prevent Wiese's film ever seeming exploitative, even though it is addressing unimaginable human depravity and degradation. For this is a film that places autoptic testimony on the record, and not just from Shin but also from former guard commander turned family man Hyuk Kwon, and onetime operative, interrogator and killer for the secret police Oh Yangnam (who fears future retribution from those he has tortured, and declares, "After this interview, I'll never talk about my life in the camp again").

All this is sobering and numbing to watch. Shin's painful admission that he informed on his own mother and brother because those were the only rules he knew, and that he then felt no grief at the aftermath because he "hadn't learnt that you're supposed to cry when your mother is executed", reveal a man broken by the knowledge that freedom has brought him. That he (much like the protagonist of Lajos Koltai's 2005 Holocaust feature *Fateless*) expresses nostalgia for both camp life and for the innocence he enjoyed there comes as a haunting coda to this troubling film on individual and national trauma. 📺

Closed Circuit

USA/United Kingdom 2013
Director: John Crowley

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

Following the arrest of David Miranda and news that GCHQ officials oversaw the destruction of hard drives at the offices of the *Guardian* newspaper, it could hardly be a better time to release a thriller like *Closed Circuit*. John Crowley's film harks back to a strain of British conspiracy thriller that thrived in the 80s, featuring HM Government as arch-evildoer (represented on television by *A Very British Coup* and *Edge of Darkness* and in film by *Defence of the Realm*).

That quintessential Thatcher-era subgenre isn't altogether successfully updated in *Closed Circuit*, which – despite its CCTV leitmotif and business with USB sticks – comes across as more than a little old-fashioned. Crowley gives Steven Knight's thinly plotted investigative drama the staid feel of traditional televisual thrillers, rather than the turbo-charged styling of *Spooks*. Much about *Closed Circuit* is creaky – notably the desultory use of that Brit-thriller standby, the clued-up American journalist who walks in, imparts vital information, then conveniently drops out of the action. Another clunky touch is the dinner party at which a chatty guest self-deprecatingly introduces herself as a humdrum Ministry of Transport functionary; played by Anne-Marie Duff, she's later revealed as an implacable security potentate, an infernal Stella Rimington in a blonde Anna Wintour bob (perhaps it's the role's underdeveloped nature which leads the usually excellent Duff to rely excessively on a you'll-never-get-away-with-this glare).

The titular wordplay refers on one level to the premise of a closed hearing, with evidence kept under lock and key by a government flouting the principle of justice – a theme hammered home early on when the BBC's John Humphrys, as himself, gives Jim Broadbent's attorney general the full now-look-here treatment in a radio interview. And, as Broadbent's insouciantly baleful mandarin tells the film's lawyer hero Martin towards the end, the circuit of justice is indeed closed, sewn up by the powers that be – powers that even the prime minister can't control (presumably a coded way of saying, don't blame us Brits, it's Washington behind all this).

The title also refers to the CCTV theme, visually established at the start as unsuspecting members of the public are caught on multiple



Camera obscura: Eric Bana, Rebecca Hall

cameras, their every word audible. The motif recurs throughout, making it clear that Martin's increasing anxiety is justified: everyone is being watched. But the theme of omnipresent surveillance is only scantily developed; the visibility of Martin and his colleague/old flame Claudia rarely figures as more than a convenient device for their opponents to catch up with them when required.

The film's prime asset is its superior acting – although not from a lukewarm Eric Bana as Martin, straining to slough off his square-jawed image in favour of something more pensively patrician. On the plus side, there's an affably poisonous Broadbent; Kenneth Cranham, seemingly adding a teaspoon of Alan Sugar to his testy judge; and Rebecca Hall, as ever endlessly watchable, bringing peppery nuance to the sardonically defiant Claudia. The film's best scenes feature her fencing verbally with Riz Ahmed who, in a significant break with his usual streetwise casting, plays a smoothly menacing security suit.

Ahmed's Naz, it's suggested, is one of that group of Muslims hurriedly recruited by British security after the 2005 London bombings; he tells Claudia, while trying to garrotte her, that it's people like him who will save British women like her from the fundamentalist menace. It's a nice twist, introduced too late and too peremptorily to bring an edge to this fusty drama. A fatigued, anticlimactic coda fails to catch the note of stark disillusionment that concluded the classic American paranoid dramas of the 70s *Parallax View* school. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tim Bevan
Eric Fellner
Chris Clark
Screenplay
Steve Knight
Director of Photography
Adriano Goldmann
Editor
Lucia Zucchetti
Production Designer
Jim Clay
Music
Joby Talbot
Production Sound Mixer
Jim Greenhorn
Costume Designer
Natalie Ward

©Focus Features LLC
Production Companies

A Focus Features presentation
A Working Title production
Executive Producers
Tim Owen
Liza Chasin
Amelia Granger

Cast
Eric Bana
Martin Rose
Rebecca Hall
Claudia Simmons-Howe
Ciarán Hinds
Devlin
Riz Ahmed
Nazrul Sharma
Anne-Marie Duff
Melissa
Kenneth Cranham
Cameron Fischer

Denis Moschitto
Farroukh Erdogan
Julia Stiles
Joanna Reece
Jim Broadbent
Attorney General
Hasan Cifti
Emir Erdogan
John Humphrys
himself

Dolby Digital/ Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures International
UK & Eire

London, the present. After a bombing at Borough Market, Turkish immigrant Farroukh Erdogan is charged with planning the attack. He is to be tried in a closed hearing, with key evidence kept secret on government orders. Barrister Martin Rose is called in to defend him, but rules prevent him from conferring with his old flame Claudia Simmons-Howe, appointed as Erdogan's special advocate. The two lawyers prepare their cases separately; Martin receives crucial information from journalist Joanna Reece, who is subsequently found dead. Martin's taxi is rammed, and Claudia is attacked. With the help of Erdogan's son Emir, the lawyers establish that Erdogan was working as a mole in a terrorist cell, and that the explosion was a blunder on the part of MI5, which is trying to cover its traces. Martin and Claudia get Emir to court, but Erdogan is found hanged in his cell and the case collapses. The pair have lost their battle to reveal the truth, but questions are asked in parliament.

Cold Comes the Night

USA 2013
Director: Tze Chun
Certificate 15 90m 29s

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

There are some oddly dysfunctional moments in Tze Chun's second feature and none more amusing than when visually impaired Russian criminal Topo, handing over the money he's transported for his employers two days past the agreed date, is twice incredulously asked why he's wearing glasses. Since he's played by three-time Emmy-winning actor Bryan Cranston – whose Walter White draws increasing numbers of viewers to HBO series *Breaking Bad* even as it arrows to the close of its sixth and final season – viewers may well also ask why he's rendered eyeless by tinted shades for the duration of the film.

Topo's handicap – and the idea that blindness is a catastrophic scourge for the career assassin – is the film's unique (if far-fetched) take on the botched-robbery thriller, the hook. But it's also paradoxically and nonsensically underplayed. There are three storylines to *Cold Comes the Night*, which, far from being Cranston's film, is weighted in sympathy and screen time towards single mother Chloe (Alice Eve), under scrutiny by social services for raising her school-age daughter in a motel frequented by prostitutes. Her on-off relationship with corrupt cop Billy (Logan Marshall-Green) completes the triangle, for when Topo's courier partner is killed in a bust-up with a hooker at Chloe's Greene County stopover, Billy makes to sell the criminals' jeep and stash the stolen cash at his home. Topo blackmails Chloe into retrieving the money from Billy (her daughter Sophia is easy leverage), while she battles on in the hope of grabbing a share so that she can flee the motel and escape the clutches of the child-protection services. Billy, meanwhile, crashes in and out of their operation, crazed and irresponsible with unrequited love for Chloe.

The narrative's failure to sustain interest stems from the fact that there's neither relationship nor meaningful interaction between the three. Each character has a clear motive from the



Logan Marshall-Green, Bryan Cranston

outset: single-minded, unstoppable, they labour alone for their own separate gain. Chloe will do anything for her 'baby'; Billy would sooner kill Chloe than be without her; Topo must deliver the package on pain of death. All roads lead to money or murder. Deep-fried in their decisiveness, the characters give nothing away; there's no seeding in conversations of profounder emotional states, no discernible internal wrangling to compensate. We know, from the outset, that there can be only one survivor.

The film's performances scarcely pour oil on troubled waters. There are big names here but, laden with a poor script, not the *right* ones. British actress Eve is unconvincing as a devoted American mother, bleaching washrooms on her hands and knees. Her past roles haven't prepared us for this, and Marshall-Green's attempts at ambiguity, perhaps to alleviate the stolid plot, discombobulate instead.

Cold Comes the Night (the title's a mystery, since most of the action takes place in the light) is a case of promising director thrown off course by budgetary freedom. Chun's first feature *Children of Invention* (2009) – about a forsaken brother and sister fending for themselves – displayed restraint and a lighter touch, and augured better than this. **S**

The Crash Reel

USA/United Kingdom/Denmark/The Netherlands 2013
Director: Lucy Walker
Certificate 12A 108m 29s

Reviewed by Wally Hammond

At first glance, a cautionary tale about daredevil American sporting dudes seems a strange project for Lucy Walker, the twice Oscar-nominated British director of *Waste Land* (2010) and *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom* (2011).

Kevin Pearce, ace snowboarder and seemingly a likely Olympic gold medallist at the time of the life-changing 2009 accident around which Walker's documentary pivots, put the idea of a film to her at a chance meeting. Despite the 60s-surfer haircut, Pearce was unlike many of his hot-headed, part-awkward-gawk, part-cool-dude extreme-sports compadres, most of whom (as brain-injured fellow snowboarder Trevor Rhoda bears witness to in the film) can't countenance a life without the addictive adrenaline of death-defying 'rides'. By the time of his meeting with Walker, Pearce had been through a conversion of sorts: from a man prepared to oppose the protective advice, wishes and feelings of his doctors, girlfriend and family (including the tears of his Down's syndrome younger brother) to one able to renounce publicly his sporting ambitions and offer his help, via campaigns such as LoveYourBrain, to fellow trauma victims.

This, essentially, is the story *The Crash Reel* tells, but for the first tantalising ten minutes or so Walker keeps her intentions hidden: beginning in the standard fast-edit, jagged-graphic mode of Extreme Sports Channel documentaries and then introducing – with a deliberate shock – a full-length shot of the prone, injured, unconscious Pearce, with a pulverised eye and bleeding mouth and nose.

From there on in it's a matter of the material. The popularity of extreme sports such as snowboarding and its close cousin skateboarding have ensured a richness – a surfeit even – of coverage, from archive footage available from broadcast channels and websites to the mass of non-professional 'phonecasts' and personal video. This has given Walker enough visuals to present many of the significant moments in Pearce's sporting life and, especially, his recovery from traumatic brain injury, even if the sources are not always evident (we don't know how much of it was provided and selected by Pearce, and how much commissioned by the filmmakers). The material is superbly edited and matched by Pedro Kos, and blessed with original music (by Walker's friend Moby) that is laudably free of the death-metal histrionics accompanying much extreme-sport output.

What is unclear, however, is how wide an audience Walker is appealing to. Her film has been praised for capturing in Pearce's particular story some of the powerful contradictions in the motives of practitioners of dangerous sports in general, and also for gesturing towards the culpability of extreme-sports organisers and their commercial promoters, who force participants to take on riskier and – well, yes – more extreme feats. (There is also a nod to the scandals of insurance companies refusing to pay out for those injured or killed in 'non-categorised' competitions or during 'guest' appearances.)

In a non-editorialised documentary like this, such critical stances are to be inferred from the utterances of interviewees rather than overtly

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mynette Louie
Producer
Trevor Sagan
Written by
Tze Chun
Osgood Perkins
Nick Simon
Director of Photography
Noah Rosenthal
Edited by
Paul Frank
Production Designer
Laurie Hicks
Music
Jeff Grace
Sound Mixer
Wil Masisak
Costume Designer
Anney Perrine

©Manitoba
Project, LLC
Production Companies
Stage 6 Films
presents a
Syncopated Films
production in
association with
Sasquatch Films,
Whitewater Films,

Three Point Capital
A film by Tze Chun
Filmed with the
support of New York
State Governor's
Office for Motion
Picture & Television
Development
Executive Producers
Scott Halle
Rick Rosenthal
Nick Morton
Jacob Pechenik
Ali Jazayeri

Cast
Alice Eve
Chloe
Logan Marshall-
Green
Billy
Ursula Parker
Sophia
Leo Fitzpatrick
Donnie from
Cincinnati
Erin Cummings
Amber
Robin Lord Taylor
Quincy
Sarah Sokolovic
Gwen

Marceline Hugot
Denise
Bryan Cranston
Topo

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing

8,143 ft +8 frames

Greene County, New York, the present. Single mother Chloe is the manager of a motel frequented by prostitutes. She is ordered by child-protection officials to relocate or lose her daughter. Near-blind Russian criminal Topo, transporting money over the border for his bosses, stops at Chloe's motel, where his driver is killed in a fight with a prostitute. Chloe's corrupt cop friend Billy removes Topo's jeep from the crime scene. Taking Chloe hostage, Topo forces her into sweet-talking the car from Billy before he sells it. When this fails, Topo has Chloe break into the impound lot to retrieve the money from the car – but the cash is gone. Chloe agrees to help Topo find it, if she can take a cut. The two take Billy prisoner. Chloe finds the money at his home, whereupon Billy's wife Amber attacks her. Topo shoots Amber dead, and leaves Billy handcuffed beside her. Returning to the motel, Topo is met by a replacement driver and leaves – but Chloe has taken a secret share of the money. She reports her experience to the police. They tell her that Billy wasn't found at the scene. Topo delivers the package but is forced to kill his employers when they find there's money missing. Topo goes to give Chloe the full sum but is gunned down by a rampaging Billy. They struggle; Billy dies. Reunited with her daughter, Chloe packs to leave with a large sum of the laundered money concealed in a tank with their pet tortoise.

Cutie and the Boxer

USA 2013

Director: Zachary Heinzerling

See interview
on page 10

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

In the opening moments of Zachary Heinzerling's debut documentary *Cutie and the Boxer* we are confronted with the startling sight of a shirtless, shockingly lithe octogenarian man giving the Floyd Mayweather Jr treatment to a huge white canvas with a pair of paint-sodden boxing gloves. The Jackson Pollock-goes-brutalist end result of this 'action painting' is just as important as the unorthodox process that gave birth to it, and the same could be said for this film: the culmination of a five-year spell Heinzerling spent with charismatic, wildly entertaining New York-based Japanese artist couple Ushio ('The Boxer') and Noriko ('Cutie') Shinohara.

Though only footage from the last year and a half made it into the final cut, the trust forged between the entirely unobtrusive director and his subjects is made apparent through his intimate access to their inner and outer lives. Captured mostly in their cramped Brooklyn apartment, and sparring openly with each other in their natural Japanese tongue, they seem totally unfazed by, and at ease with, the camera. As the film progresses, it becomes clear that Noriko – ostensibly Ushio's assistant – is the real focus despite Ushio's concerted efforts to flog his latest sculptures. In a touch of formal genius, Noriko's autobiographical watercolour paintings (in which she is the pigtailed 'Cutie' and Ushio the unrecognisable Brando/Botticelli mélange 'Bullie') come to life in the form of elegant animations through which we learn about the history of their relationship: we see how she moved to New York as a teen on her parents' dime, was swept off her feet by this virile immigrant art-punk/sometime Warhol associate, and ultimately ended up playing second fiddle in a penurious artistic partnership. The animation is a device that gives Noriko the agency to tell her story, and accentuates the opposite nature of the couple's artistic sensibilities: whereas Ushio's art is dynamic and hyper-masculine, Noriko's is reflective and poignantly concerned with exploring other narrative possibilities, such as how life might've been if she'd stood up for her own art at a younger age.

It wouldn't have been difficult for Heinzerling to have amplified some of Ushio's characteristics in service of a more outwardly feminist narrative. After all, chauvinistic intransigence appears to be his default setting. ("She is just an assistant. The average one has to support the genius," he



Art attack: Ushio Shinohara, Noriko Shinohara

sniffs at one point.) However, the director also remains respectfully compassionate towards Ushio in his footage choices, and his admiration for the man's dedication to his life's work as a struggling artist is clear. Ushio has built up the bulletproof self-confidence one needs to endure such a life, but carefully selected archive footage (from a news report and an unfinished 1986 documentary) reveals a man plagued by demons, forever on the fringes of both success and society. When Heinzerling intercuts haunting footage of Ushio's drink-fuelled 80s meltdown ("I've got nothing! This is so hard!"), the frayed VHS quality affording his pitiful wailing an ethereal quality, it is merely one of the film's myriad reminders that the Shinoharas are not the sparky, rich-parent Brooklyn wisecracks of *Frances Ha* and *Girls* but the real deal. "Art is a demon that drags you along," Ushio opines. "You throw yourself away to be an artist."

Above all, *Cutie and the Boxer* is a love story, albeit one infused with refreshingly strong feminist undertones and boasting an intriguing spin on the American Dream narrative. The film's best moment is fittingly understated: in the present day, Ushio films Noriko in the Japanese area of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Without warning, a stunning match cut transports us back to footage of a young, beautiful, dancing Noriko, dressed in red and again being filmed by Ushio. This single moment of formal brilliance encapsulates the film's key theme of love filtered through an artistic lens; it's an intimate slice of spliced documentation which reveals that the vicissitudes of time, and the travails of art, have done little to diminish this inspirational couple's enduring love. **S**



Soar feat: 'The Crash Reel'

stated. You could say that Walker's methods are subtle, expressing a desire to allow ideas and attitudes to rise organically from the mouths of those represented. But the effect is unsatisfactory, not least because the scope is so narrow, few of the people quoted here are particularly articulate (that's not to say inexpressive) and the focus, Pearce, has suffered brain damage (albeit damage from which he is recovering).

The Crash Reel is neither a portrait of a sporting life nor a more generalised cautionary tale with the offer of any real caution. What it does offer, only incidentally, is a morality tale about family. Pearce's middle-class family are extraordinary in their support of him, and have undoubtedly provided the bedrock on which he can build a new life. But many of his fellow competitors are from far less privileged backgrounds and it's hard to see how they will find any guidance here. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Julian Cautherley
Lucy Walker
Written by
Pedro Kos
Lucy Walker
Cinematography
Nick Higgins
Edited by
Pedro Kos
**Supervising
Sound Editor**
D. Chris Smith

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Again, LLC
**Production
Companies**
HBO documentary

films presents in
association with
Impact Partners a
Tree Tree Tree film
Made with the
generous support of
Impact Partners and
support from Puma
Creative Catalyst
Award, The Fledgling
Fund, MountainFilm,
CHIP:DOX Forum,
IDFA Forum
In association
with Sky Atlantic
**Executive
Producers**
Geraldyn Dreyfous
for Impact Partners:

Dan Cogan
for HBO:
Shelia Nevins

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Soda Pictures

9,763 ft +8 frames

Promotional, 'vérité' and home-video footage shows 21-year-old champion snowboarder Kevin Pearce training for the 2010 Winter Olympics. Practising a difficult manoeuvre known as the 'double cork' in December 2009, Pearce falls badly on his neck and head, suffering brain damage and coma.

A mixed edit of footage looks back at Pearce's snowboarding career, from his precocious sporting development as a child to his three medal successes at the 2008 Winter X Games in Aspen. Pearce's recovery and rehabilitation are then outlined: a month in intensive care followed by five months' specialist treatment at Craig Hospital in Denver, Colorado.

Back with his family in Vermont, Pearce insists that he will return to competitive sport, despite the advice of his medical team. Following a lacklustre performance in trial competitions, however, he begins to come to terms with the traumatic events that have overtaken him.

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Patrick Burns
Sierra Pettengill
Zachary Heinzerling
**Director of
Photography**
Zachary Heinzerling
Editor
David Teague
Original Score
Yasuaki Shimizu
Sound Designer
Mark Phillips

©Ex Lion Tamer, Inc.
Production

Companies
Ex Lion Tamer
presents a Cine
Mosaic production
A film by Zachary
Heinzerling
With support from
Cinereach, The
Jerome Foundation,
Independent
Filmmaker Project,
New York State
Council on the Arts,
San Francisco Film
Society & Kenneth
Rainin Foundation, TFI

Documentary Fund
Produced in
association with Little
Magic Films, Inc.
Executive Producers
Kiki Miyake
Lydia Dean Pilcher

In Colour
[1.78:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Dogwoof

A documentary about New York-based Japanese artists Ushio ('The Boxer') and Noriko ('Cutie') Shinohara, who have been married for 40 years. Ushio is 80 and continues to paint and sculpt; Noriko is 59 and, having spent many years as her husband's assistant, is now concentrating on her own artistic career. Present-day footage is interspersed with animated renderings of Noriko's watercolour paintings, home-video and archive news footage, and excerpts from an unfinished 1986 documentary about Ushio.

The film concludes with the couple's joint exhibition at a gallery in Manhattan.

Diana

United Kingdom/Belgium/France/Sweden 2013
Director: Oliver Hirschbiegel
Certificate 12A 112m 48s

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Aimed squarely at the commemorative-crockery market, this sycophantic biopic depicts the last two years of Princess Diana's life as tragic love story, with down-to-earth heart surgeon Hasnat Khan as the bit of relatively-rough who breaks open the airless box of royal protocol and whisks our simpering heroine into a world of fast-food takeaways and football on the telly. The fatal flaw is not, naturally, the fact that Diana is a bit of a loon but the cruel twist of fate that has deposited her in a gilded cage, hemmed in by press intrusion and stuffy royal aides yet yearning to express her – now what was it again? Oh yes, her *love*.

Hogtied by excessive reverence (and presumably by an aversion to lawsuits), the film stumbles from scene to scene without ever finding much of a story to tell, depending instead on retch-worthy sentimentality delivered via unwieldy chunks of risible dialogue. Poor Naomi Watts does a passable impersonation of Diana's cringing mannerisms, but don't look for any kind of angle on this tedious woman's life. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Robert Bernstein
Douglas Rae
Written by
Stephen Jeffreys
Inspired by the book
*Diana Her Last
Love* by Kate Snell
**Director of
Photography**
Rainer Klausmann
Editor
Hans Funck
**Production
Designer**
Kave Quinn
Music
David Holmes
Keefus Ciancia
Sound Recordist
Martin Trevis
Costume Designer
Julian Day

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Films Limited
**Production
Companies**
An Ecosse Films
production
Co-produced with
SCOPE Pictures, Le
Pacte, Film i Väst
and Filmgate Films
An Oliver
Hirschbiegel film
A co-production
between Ecosse
Films, SCOPE
Pictures and Le

Pacte in association
with B Media
Export, Indefilms,
A Plus Image 4 and
Palatine Etoile 10
With the support of
the Tax Shelter of
the Belgian Federal
Government via
SCOPE Invest
Made with the
support of the
UK Film Council's
Development Fund
With the support
of the Media
Programme of the
European Union
**Executive
Producers**
Tim Haslam
Xavier Marchand
Mark Woolley

Cast
Naomi Watts
Diana, Princess
of Wales
Naveen Andrews
Dr Hasnat Khan
Douglas Hodge
Paul Burrell
Charles Edwards
Patrick Jephson
Geraldine James
Oonagh
Shanley-Toffolo
Juliet Stevenson
Sonia

Cas Anvar
Dodi Fayed
Daniel Pirrie
Jason Fraser
Michael Byrne
Christiaan Barnard
Art Malik
Samundar

**Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]**

Distributor
EI Films

10,152 ft +0 frames

In 1996, Diana, Princess of Wales is a lonely woman heartbroken by her estranged husband's public dismissal of her. She is learning to fight back via the media, and when she meets heart surgeon Hasnat Khan she believes that she has found a man who shares her humanitarian vocation. Their affair suffers setbacks caused by media intrusion, but blossoms into love as they get to know each other. Diana is inspired by Hasnat to take control of her image, and travels to Pakistan to try to win over his traditional family. But when Diana interferes in his career they split up, though they both still love each other. Diana uses a friendly paparazzo to leak pictures of herself with Dodi Fayed, but when she takes her fateful late-night drive through Paris, Hasnat is still refusing to take her calls.

Drinking Buddies

USA 2013
Director: Joe Swanberg
Certificate 15 90m 27s



Pour out your troubles: Anna Kendrick, Ron Livingston

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Writer-director Joe Swanberg is startlingly prolific: 16 features since 2005, plus shorts, TV work and numerous acting stints, often starring in his own movies. He's recently been quoted as saying, "I realised that because I'd been producing so much work, I hadn't changed enough as a person between projects." You might say the same of his films; not a lot has changed since his early shoestring mumblecore hits *Kissing on the Mouth* (2005) and *Hannah Takes the Stairs* (2007). *Drinking*

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Andrea Roa
Joe Swanberg
Alicia Van Couvering
Paul Bernon
Sam Slater
Written by
Joe Swanberg
**Director of
Photography**
Ben Richardson
Edited by
Joe Swanberg
**Production
Designer**
Brandon Tonner-
Connolly
Sound Mixer
Jesse McAlpin
Costume Designer
Amanda Ford

©Drinking

Buddies, LLC
**Production
Companies**
Burn Later presents
in association with
Rise Entertainment
and Dark Arts
**Executive
Producers**
Mike Witherill
Olivia Wilde
Anish Savjani
David Kaplan
Jessica Klapman
Ashley Bernon

Cast
Olivia Wilde
Kate
Jake Johnson
Luke
Anna Kendrick

Jill
Ron Livingston
Chris
Ti West
Dave
Jason Sudeikis
Gene Dentler
Mike Brune
Mike
Frank V. Ross
Frank

**In Colour
[2.35:1]**

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing

8,140ft +8 frames

Present-day Chicago. Kate and Luke both work in a small craft brewery, she in the office as events manager, he on the brewing floor. They have a friendly, flirtatious relationship and often eat lunch together or go out drinking after work along with co-workers Frank, Mike and Dave. Kate's boyfriend is music producer Chris; Luke is engaged to art historian Jill. Chris invites Luke and Jill along for a weekend at his family's cabin in Michigan. Chris and Jill go for a walk in the woods and kiss each other, while Kate and Luke stay in the cabin playing blackjack and horsing around, and later go for a midnight swim.

Back at work, Kate announces that she and Chris have broken up. Celebrating her freedom that evening, she ends up going home with Dave. Luke sulks at first but gets over it and invites Kate to dinner with him and Jill. Jill leaves for a week's research trip in Costa Rica. Kate decides to move to a smaller apartment and Luke offers to help her; exhausted, they spend the night chastely together. The next day Luke cuts his hand badly on a nail while lifting a couch. To his annoyance, Kate calls on Frank, Mike and Dave to help out. Afterwards, Kate and Luke argue and he leaves. At his apartment he finds Jill, back early from her trip; she confesses about kissing Chris. At work, Kate and Luke eat lunch side by side, and resume their bantering, flirtatious relationship.

Buddies boasts a bigger budget and more polished widescreen cinematography (courtesy of DP Ben Richardson, who shot the visually striking if occasionally vapid *Beasts of the Southern Wild*), but essentially we're still in mumblecore territory. The largely improvised dialogue meanders, rarely rising much above the banal ("How's the bed?" "It's really squishy," runs a typical exchange), and many scenes go on too long without enough happening. True to life, perhaps, but unrelieved truth-to-life can make for a woefully stodgy diet.

The cast, though, often lift the dialogue above its inherent level. As flirtatious co-workers but never-quite lovers Kate and Luke, Olivia Wilde and Jake Johnson (each gratefully seizing their most substantial part to date) spark convincingly likeable chemistry between them, while Anna Kendrick and Ron Livingston selflessly flesh out their roles as Chris and Jill, Kate and Luke's nice but unexciting other halves. A scene during a weekend the two couples spend together at a country cabin, when Chris and Jill kiss simply because their painfully stilted conversation has finally run into the ground and they can't think what else to do, is one of the funniest in the film. (It's intercut with Kate and Luke back at the cabin getting hammered, playing blackjack and enjoying the hell out of each other's company.) Wilde's intense green-eyed stare is at its most potent when Kate bawls out Luke, at the disastrous end of what should have been a romantic day together, for presuming too much of their friendship.

This scene pinpoints the film's key strength, that it determinedly sidesteps the predictable happy ending. The tragicomedy of the two mismatched couples has been a fictional staple at least since *Così fan tutte* if not earlier; and Swanberg emulates Mozart and da Ponte in avoiding an all-too-neat solution with each couple swapping partners and finding true last-reel happiness. Instead, we're left with a plausibly messy conclusion:

Apart from the four leads, no other character gets much more than a walk-on role. (Swanberg himself contributes a tiny cameo as an aggressive driver.) Kate's dissatisfied boss Gene (Jason Sudeikis) seems set to play a larger role in the action but soon fades out. *Drinking Buddies* repeatedly veers towards insights about love, friendship and intimacy, but the overall shagginess keeps fogging the lens. Swanberg's right: he should leave longer intervals between projects. There's potential there; give it time to develop. **S**

Enough Said

USA/United Kingdom/Australia 2013
Director: Nicole Holofcener
Certificate 12A 92m 55s

Reviewed by Calum Marsh


For roughly 30 minutes, Nicole Holofcener's *Enough Said* seems content merely to linger in the presence of its leads, an affable pairing of Julia Louis-Dreyfus and the late James Gandolfini. We are introduced, in no great hurry, to Eva (Louis-Dreyfus), a middle-class Californian masseuse and long-time divorcee disconsolate at the prospect of seeing her teenage daughter move away to college. Encouraged by a friend one evening to attend a glamorous cocktail party, Eva meets Albert (Gandolfini), a heavy-set television archivist whose social candour and self-deprecating humour she finds endearing. Eva agrees, somewhat reluctantly, to join Albert on a dinner date at a trendy downtown restaurant, but hesitation is quickly replaced by affection as the two find themselves slipping into the familiar rhythms of romance. These early scenes have a certain leisurely quality which, given the contemporary romantic comedy's tendency to err towards overdetermined, proves quite appealing. Eva and Albert's interactions – inelegant but earnest, their diffident gestures of desire inflected by a history of heartbreak and hurt – unfurl so gradually and with such patient naturalism that the tenor of the drama seems practically Rohmerian, a rare achievement indeed for a mainstream picture of otherwise resolute conventionality.

But then, alas, a plot develops – and a rather high-concept one at that. Holofcener, perhaps convinced that an ordinary relationship wouldn't be enough to constitute a feature, feels compelled to drag her well-developed characters into the sort of premise ideal for one-sentence synopsis and trailer-ready marketability: Eva's recently acquired massage client Marianne (Catherine Keener), we learn, is in fact Albert's embittered ex-wife, a revelation Eva decides to conceal in order to facilitate a bit of surreptitious primary-source research. Regarding Marianne as a sort of Yelp for prospective lovers, Eva plies her exhaustively for dirt on Albert under the pretence of friendly



James Gandolfini, Julia Louis-Dreyfus

conversation, and the grievances thus aired fill her otherwise optimistic heart with doubt.

The central question posed by this dilemma – namely, whether the friction that ends long-term relationships is inherent in the people or only emerges between them over time – is of considerably more interest than the contrived emotional fallout animated by its articulation, and Holofcener proves less capable at engineering the machinations of her plotting than at realising the characters who must endure them. Predictably, Eva's ill-advised reconnaissance mission comes to a premature close when Albert and Marianne get wise to the scheme, and the confrontation that results summarily torpedoes her relationship at precisely the moment she realises she wants to be in it. And yet, of course, these things have a way of working themselves out, and it would hardly qualify as a spoiler to say that the film concludes on a note of reconciliation. This deference to narrative convention is regrettable, particularly when one considers how attuned Holofcener is to the film's more amorphous emotional texture. And certainly there is pleasure – albeit bittersweet – in seeing Gandolfini, in his penultimate role, delivering a performance of such warmth and conviction. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Anthony Bregman
Stefanie Azpiazu
Written by
Nicole Holofcener
Director of Photography
Xavier Grobet
Film Editor
Robert Frazen
Production Designer
Keith Cunningham
Music
Marcelo Zarvos
Sound Mixer
Lisa Pinero
Costume Designer
Leah Katznelson

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Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain)
Production Companies
Fox Searchlight Pictures presents a Likely Story production
Made in association with TSG Entertainment and Ingenious Media
Produced in association with Big Screen Productions
Executive Producer
Chrisann Verges

Cast
Julia Louis-Dreyfus
Eva
James Gandolfini
Albert
Catherine Keener
Marianne
Toni Collette

Sarah
Tavi Gevinson
Chloe
Ben Falcone
Will
Tracey Fairway
Ellen
Eve Hewson
Tess
Lennie Loftin
Martin, massage client
Jessica St Clair
Cynthia, massage client
Chris Smith
Hal, massage client
Michaela Watkins
Hilary

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
20th Century Fox International (UK)

8,362 ft +8 frames

California, present day. Eva is a divorced, middle-class massage therapist preparing to see her teenage daughter Ellen off to college. Attending a cocktail party one evening with her friend Sarah, Eva is introduced to the unattractive but endearing Albert, a divorced TV archivist who also has a daughter set to leave home for school. At the same party, Eva meets Marianne, an elegant poet who professes an interest in hiring a masseuse. Eva soon begins working with Marianne and the two become firm friends.

Meanwhile Eva and Albert have an encouraging first date. As Eva becomes closer to Marianne and Albert, an anecdote they both tell about guacamole makes it obvious that they are in fact the former spouses that each regularly complains about. Seeing the situation as an opportunity to find out about Albert's bad qualities from the woman who ought to know best, Eva decides to keep this revelation a secret from both of them. Rather than make her burgeoning relationship with Albert run more smoothly, however, the information she gleans from Marianne puts considerable strain on it, making her so attuned to his ticks that every one begins to bother her.

Eventually, Marianne and Albert learn of Eva's deception, and the hurt puts an end to a relationship that Eva realises too late she wants.

The Fifth Estate

USA 2013
Director: Bill Condon

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópido

One of the most widely recognised and controversial public figures of the 21st century is surely the white-haired Australian Julian Assange, internet political activist, founder and editor-in-chief of the whistleblower site WikiLeaks, and now the protagonist of a feature film, despite being suspended in a strange limbo of diplomatic asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, his situation far from resolved.

The Fifth Estate is director Bill Condon's follow-up to his two *Twilight* films, and the first fiction feature to try to make sense of the convoluted WikiLeaks story, a quagmire of murky ethics, mutual recrimination and its founder's personal idiosyncrasies exposed to the media glare. Condon chooses not to dwell on such matters as the accusations of sexual assault levelled at Assange (mentioned in passing), his problematic upbringing in a sect (briefly dealt with in flashbacks) or his relationship with his son, but rather on the thorny partnership with German programmer/activist and effectively right-hand man Daniel Domscheit-Berg – the film is in fact based on the latter's memoir *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website*.

Unfortunately, it takes a lot of the film's running time to get to the meat of the story, which in essence comprises a straightforward political thriller peaking with the Assange/Domscheit-Berg clash over the ethical implications of publishing the Bradley Manning files – ie including the informants' unedited personal data, hence putting their and their family members' lives at risk. The opening shots are a quick-fire summary of the most significant tools of human communication throughout history – from cave engravings to Egyptian hieroglyphs, press, radio, TV and finally the internet – and the first half of the film continues in similar vein, coming across as a spoon-fed, fast-forward account of the events surrounding the origins of WikiLeaks.

Much time is spent watching the two protagonists scrutinising their own (or each other's) laptop screens. To spice things up, Condon works hard at his *mise en scène* – for example when Assange and Domscheit-Berg are shown in a metaphorical office suspended in an internet 'cloud' as they plug away on their computers. Assange's image is multiplied, *Matrix*-like, ad



Benedict Cumberbatch, Daniel Brühl

infinitem, implying the extent of his presence and control on the internet.

Albeit permeated with a sense of déjà vu, this strategy does enliven some otherwise stagey scenes, as does the familiar use of words superimposed on screens within screens, revealing the multitude of emails and texts rapidly exchanged by the protagonists as they leap from country to country, laptop or mobile in hand. Despite this, and despite Benedict Cumberbatch's utterly convincing impersonation of Assange, the end result feels sluggish and contrived, never quite mustering the agility or excitement of other significant films centred on internet geniuses, such as Mark Zuckerberg in *The Social Network* (2010).

As could be expected, Condon's film has already generated a fair amount of its own controversy online, partly because of the currency of its subject-matter, and also because of a ten-page email that Assange sent to Cumberbatch, stating his reasons why the actor shouldn't take the part. The topicality of the subject should ensure *The Fifth Estate* a large audience, but it also underpins arguably the film's strongest suit: a refusal to regard itself as the ultimate arbiter of what happened, but simply one of many possible versions. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Steve Golin
Michael Sugar

Written by

Josh Singer

Based on the book

Inside Wikileaks by

Daniel Domscheit-

Berg and the

Guardian book

Wikileaks by David

Leigh, Luke Harding

Director of

Photography

Tobias Schliessler

Editor

Virginia Katz

Production

Designer

Mark Tildesley

Music

Carter Burwell

Sound

John Rodda

Costume Designer

Shay Cunliffe

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Production Companies

DreamWorks

Pictures and

Reliance

Entertainment

present in

association with

Participant Media

an Anonymous

Content production

A Bill Condon film

Executive Producers

Richard Sharkey

Paul Green

Jeff Skoll

Jonathan King

Cast

Benedict

Cumberbatch

Julian Assange

Daniel Brühl

Daniel

Domscheit-Berg

Anthony Mackie

Sam Colson

David Thewlis

Nick Davies

Alicia Vikander

Anke Domscheit

Peter Capaldi

Alan Rusbridger

Carice van Houten

Birgitta Jónsdóttir

Dan Stevens

Ian Katz

Stanley Tucci

James Boswell

Laura Linney

Sarah Shaw

Dolby Digital/

Datasat/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

El Films

A fictionalised recreation of events surrounding the whistleblower internet site Wikileaks. In 2007, Australian founder and editor-in-chief Julian Assange recruits German programmer/activist Daniel Domscheit-Berg. This in turn leads to the exposure of alleged malpractice at banks such as Julius Bär in Switzerland, the release of a video showing the killing of innocent civilians by US military in a Baghdad airstrike and the publication in 2010 – with the assistance of international newspapers – of classified data leaked by US soldier Bradley Manning. Assange and Domscheit-Berg part company over a disagreement about the ethics of publishing the Manning material – Domscheit-Berg is concerned about the risks for the informants involved and their families. Domscheit-Berg attempts to prevent publication but Assange goes ahead. Prosecuted by the US Department of Justice and accused of sexual assault, Assange seeks diplomatic asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London. Domscheit-Berg publishes his memoirs about the events.

Folie à deux Madness Made of Two

United Kingdom 2012

Director: Kim Hopkins



House of uncommons: Helen Heraty

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

An independently wealthy single mother meets an affluent architect via a personal ad in the *Times*. Together they cash in his substantial property portfolio and spend the proceeds on a historic 72-room pile in York. But just as they're seeking financing to turn their home into a luxury boutique hotel, what should happen along but the global financial crisis? And then there are the neighbours, forever trespassing on their cobbled courtyard... If your heart isn't exactly bleeding for Helen Heraty and John Edwards, that's not the straightforward intention of Kim Hopkins's documentary – although the film is slyly reticent about just what feelings it is seeking to stimulate. For some viewers, it will play as a sad case study of the devastation wrought by the credit crunch on the hopes and dreams of people whose hard work and diligent saving have earned them the right to pursue their dreams. For others it will seem a story steeped in Schadenfreude – a wickedly

enjoyable shaming of the wealthy and deluded.

Most definitely not in on the joke, if joke it is, is Heraty herself, whose efforts not to relinquish her pricey dream project and sideline campaign of pettiness against her neighbours command the bulk of the screen time. A sort of Middle English version of *Grey Gardens*' Little Edie Beale – less loveable, not so wayward of wardrobe, but possessed of the same faded-bombshell looks, fiery indignation and utter absence of self-awareness – Heraty truly seems to regard the elusiveness of two million spare quid to kit out a hotel that “the hoi polloi won't know about” to be a humanitarian crisis. Edwards, her partner, is more severe and realistic, but no less cloistered in wealth. “It couldn't have happened at a worse time,” he opines of the financial crisis, rather as if the most significant and tragic consequence of the global economic meltdown has been the crippling of one rich couple's white elephant.

Yet despite their high-handedness, there's no mistaking the fact that Heraty and Edwards are real people whose pain and worries are genuine. A property they had banked on seeing valued at upwards of £3 million comes in instead at £500,000; Edwards's architecture practice goes bankrupt; Heraty at one point can't gather enough change to buy a pint of milk. Much as we might be tempted to mock them (Heraty in particular apparently can't stop herself saying things like, “You act as if you were brought up on some sink estate!”), anyone who's ever whined from a position of relative luxury has risked Heraty and Edwards's brand of obnoxiousness, and anyone who's enjoyed a stay in a lovely boutique hotel devoid of hoi polloi has benefited from the hell-bent elitist perfectionism of people like them. Thus what starts like an extended episode of the upmarket property makeover programme *Grand Designs* reveals itself as a canny interrogation of ideas of worth, responsibility, privilege and necessity.

Less successful are the film's close focus on Heraty (even a less shrill and grandiose subject would, granted this much screen time, grate on the nerves) and the soundtrack of custom-written folk songs by Lucy Ward, which is overused and becomes intrusive. Finally, the subject-matter is too enclosed and too repetitive to feel properly cinematic, although there are some unexpected moments of visual beauty, particularly during the dramatically dim and dusty beach funeral that closes the piece. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Kim Hopkins

Margareta Szabo

Camera

Kim Hopkins

Editing

Kim Hopkins

Margareta Szabo

Music

Lucy Ward

Barnabas Balazs

Dubbing Mixer

Jez Foden

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Production Companies

Ballpark Film

Distributors, Labor

Of Love Films

presents a film

by Kim Hopkins

Executive Producers

Simon Beaufoy

Herbert Lockwood

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Distributor

Ballpark Film

Distributors

In 2008, Helen Heraty and her partner John Edwards spend £1.6 million on Gray's Court, a 72-room mansion in central York. They seek massive bank loans to turn the property into a luxury hotel, but the financial crisis derails their plans. As she searches with increasing desperation for a lender prepared to back the project, Helen engages in a rancorous dispute with her neighbour, the National Trust, over rightful usage of the courtyard outside her house. Without an investor, Helen and John find themselves besieged by creditors, with interest on their existing loans vaulting. John's architectural practice goes bankrupt and Gray's Court is valued at a substantially lower figure than the couple had expected. Three and a half years into their escapade, relying on credit cards, the couple open a café in the house's grounds but it loses money. John dies unexpectedly of a heart attack. Using his life-insurance money, Helen continues to work on the hotel plan. She resolves her dispute with the National Trust and becomes a member.

Last Passenger

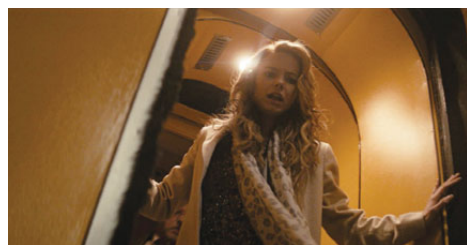
United Kingdom 2012
Director: Omid Nooshin
Certificate 15 96m 31s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

A runaway-train thriller set on the line between London and Hastings, this has a pleasantly old-fashioned, Brit-film feel, augmented by the fact that the plot requires its passengers to be on an outdated slam-door diesel train which can't be stopped by turning off the electrified track. The simple premise – which echoes Bernard Vorhaus's *The Last Journey* (1936) – keeps its literal plot-motor character off screen, represented only by a voice heard sparingly on the intercom, and lets a gaggle of archetypal passengers rise (or not) to the occasion.

Dougray Scott, a widowed doctor with a small, recalcitrant son in tow, intent on getting off the train to do an emergency shift in casualty, is obviously the hero. The hard-headed businessman in first class (David Schofield) and the fare-dodging Polish smoking-ban violator (Iddo Goldberg) set aside their squabbles to listen to him. Late in the day, Scott turns out to be a former Olympic hopeful who hasn't run since sustaining a knee injury... and promptly has to sprint away from an explosion.

Slightly hampered by patches of dodgy CGI, director/co-writer Omid Nooshin's debut feature isn't too proud to deploy cliché but is all the more likeable for it. **B**



Runaway train: Kara Tointon

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Ado Yoshizaki
Cassuto
Zack Winfield
Written by
Omid Nooshin
Andrew Love
Director of Photography
Angus Hudson
Editor
Joe Walker
Production Designer
Jon Bunker
Music Composed and Conducted by
Liam Bates
Sound Recordist
Henry Milliner
Costume Designer
Ali Mitchell

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Institute/Last

Passenger Ltd
Production Companies
BFI and Pinewood
Films in association with Future
Films/2B Pictures, Pathé present an NDF International production
Made with the support of the BFI's Film Fund
Executive Producers
Michiyo Yoshizaki
Carola Ash
Kwesi Dickson
Stephen Margolis
Stephen Norris
Nick Smith
Fumio Nagase
Mike Runagall

Cast

Dougray Scott
Lewis Shaler
Kara Tointon
Sarah Barwell
David Schofield
Peter Carmichael
Iddo Goldberg
Jan Klimowski
Lindsay Duncan
Elaine Middleton
Joshua Kaynama
Max Shaler

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Kaleidoscope
Entertainment

8,686 ft +8 frames

Present-day UK. An unknown passenger replaces the driver of a late-night train and speeds up, intent on committing suicide by crashing into the buffers at the terminus. Lewis Shaler, a doctor travelling with his young son Max, rallies his fellow passengers – Sarah Barwell, Peter Carmichael, Jan Klimowski – to try to slow down the train. Finally Lewis manages to uncouple the rear carriage, though he is trapped on the speeding train and has to jump on to the track before it crashes. He survives.

The Lebanese Rocket Society

France/Lebanon/Qatar/United Arab Emirates 2012
Directors: Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

The duo of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige are artists and filmmakers specialising in images of their native Lebanon and – as their website puts it – questions of “the fabrication of imaginaries in the region and beyond”. Probably their best-known film, 2008's *I Want to See*, enlisted Catherine Deneuve, playing herself, as an outside witness to Lebanon's contemporary condition.

The Lebanese Rocket Society ostensibly seems a straighter, and lighter, proposition: whimsically subtitled ‘The Strange Tale of the Lebanese Space Race’, it's the story of a once celebrated attempt by enthusiastic researchers to develop rockets in the early 60s. This pioneering venture – resulting in what's billed here as the first rocket of the Arab world – was briefly the focus of a surge of national pride in Lebanon, and of what the filmmakers regard as a moment of utopian vision in the Middle East. What's just as fascinating for Hadjithomas and Joreige, however, is the fact that this episode has been almost totally forgotten, erased from what they term “the collective imaginary”. Their film is a serious attempt to retrieve the rocketeers' vision from such cultural amnesia.

The result is a film of several strands, which never quite lock together satisfactorily. Its first section is a teasing piece of detective work, with the directors digging through yellowed newsprint and visiting a ramshackle film archive as commentators lament the dearth of information on the Lebanese Rocket Society. In fact, plenty of evidence finally emerges, notably in the form of period footage showing the rockets and their makers in action. The anecdotal material is often fascinating – especially when dealing with the cheerfully amateur nature of the early experiments, with researchers obliged to mix their own chemical propellant by hand.

A little of this information goes a long way, however, and the story starts to lose altitude until the filmmakers concentrate on placing the Society's project in a wider perspective. They show how its successful Cedar rockets, and the public's fascination with them, fitted the context of a surge of modernising energy in the Arab world of the 1960s, propelled by figures such as Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Cedar programme, the film argues, became a symbolic focus for dreams of unity in the region.

The film takes a fully contemplative turn when the directors – heard in voiceover throughout – muse on the question of utopian dreaming and the conditions that enable it or otherwise. Their lament is for the passing of the spirit embodied by researcher Manoug Manougian and his largely Armenian body of students, and for the possibilities the Cedar rockets offered to Lebanon in particular and to the Arab world in general. After 1967, and the ensuing crisis of confidence in the Arab world, the filmmakers argue, the primary casualty for Lebanon was “the image we have of ourselves... Dreaming was confiscated”. But Hadjithomas and Joreige are inclined to make heavy weather of it when most overtly speaking like artists: “Outwitting reality, provoking it, defying it, transforming it... This is the fruit of what we were, what we can still be today...”

In an entertaining and somewhat underplayed



Gone to launch: *The Lebanese Rocket Society*

final stretch, the filmmakers propose to erect a sculpture of the successful Cedar 4 rocket, and face several obstacles before they can do so: notably the government collapse of 2011, as well as qualms from a minister who argues, understandably, that Lebanon has seen enough of rockets in recent years. An awkward animated coda by Ghassan Halwani proposes that had rocket research continued, it might have resulted in a truly secure and prosperous future for Lebanon – but this sequence comes across as a clunky add-on to a film that never quite knits its straightforward storytelling with its more discursive drive. Compared to Patricio Guzmán's recent essay on Chilean astronomy, *Nostalgia for the Light*, a truly resonant picture of society's relation to technological dreaming, Hadjithomas and Joreige's film remains largely earthbound. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Georges Schoucair
Édouard Mauriat
Cinematographers
Jeanne Lapoirie
Rachel Aoun
Editor
Tina Baz Legal
Original Music
Nadim Mishlawi
Sound Editing
Rana Eid

©Mille et une Productions - Abbout Productions
Production Companies
Georges Schoucair for Abbout Productions and Édouard Mauriat for Mille et une Productions present with the support of Doha Film Institute

with the participation of Centre National du Cinema et de l'Image Animée and the support of Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) and Fonds Francophone de production audiovisuelle du Sud with the participation of SANAD Development Fund - Abu Dhabi Film Festival, Urban Distribution International and Pascale and Michael Zammam a film by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Soda Pictures

French theatrical title
The Lebanese Rocket Society
L'étrange aventure de la conquête spatiale libanaise

A documentary in which filmmakers Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige investigate the pioneering but now forgotten Lebanese rocket programme, launched by mathematician Manoug Manougian and his students at Beirut's Haigazian University in the 1960s. The first rocket programme in the Arab world, Manougian's venture spurred a national wave of enthusiasm and attracted government funding before being taken over by the army; it was terminated following the June 1967 war. Interviewing participants and witnesses, including Manougian, the filmmakers propose to commemorate the project with a sculpture of its Cedar 4 rocket, which is at last installed at Haigazian University.

Like Father, like Son

Director: Kore-eda Hirokazu



Reviewed by Peter Matthews

Baby-switching plots are a staple of American daytime soap opera, where the interminably delayed reveal unleashes the extravagant heartbreak on which the genre thrives. Literature offers a few more reputable antecedents: Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, where the transposed infants belong to different races, or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, where they belong to different religions. The incredible nature of the premise already skews it towards comedy, and fiction writers typically magnify the gap between the newborns in order to lampoon wider social divisions. The most notable example in cinema is Etienne Chatiliez's *Life Is a Long Quiet River* (1988), which zoologically compares the uptight decorum of a bourgeois family with the ebullient slobbiness of a proletarian clan, to rather coarse-woven farcical effect.

Kore-eda Hirokazu's latest film, *Like Father, Like Son*, takes off from a similar class opposition, as career-driven professional Ryota (Fukuyama Masaharu) and his wife Midori (Ono Machiko) discover that their biological tot has been raised by cheerfully indolent shopkeepers Yudai (Lily Franky) and Yukari (Maki Yoko). But this reliably warm-hearted director resists the abrasive satirical possibilities of the situation, just as his spare, observational method attenuates the melodrama.

Still, despite its many gentle virtues, *Like Father* is possibly the least convincing of Kore-eda's perennial meditations on the Japanese family. That critics have ritually bracketed him with Ozu is understandable, if not entirely fair. Kore-eda's oeuvre actually exhibits much stylistic and tonal diversity, ranging from the giddy fusion of documentary with Capraesque fantasy in *After Life* (1998) to the stern neorealist inspiration of *Nobody Knows* (2004) and the dark erotic whimsy of his boldest film, *Air Doll* (2009). But there's no denying that nearly all Kore-eda's dramas touch on the fine meshwork of tensions and resentments eternally separating parents from children – and as in Ozu, tears well up at the vision of life's ineffable sadness. *Still Walking* (2008), an explicit homage to the master's quotidian plainness and formal rigour, contains what may be the single most piercing moment in Kore-eda's cinema. At an annual family reunion commemorating the eldest son, who died rescuing a stranger, the matriarch explains – while tranquilly stitching a lace collar – that the embarrassed survivor is invited year after year “to make him feel awful too”. Her casual cruelty is not judged; it's simply how things are. The same philosophical acceptance even holds for the pea-brained mother in *Nobody Knows*, who abandons four kids to slow destitution with barely a flicker of remorse.

Though Kore-eda goes about it discreetly, *Like Father* shows an unwonted tendency to stack the moral deck. Occupying a sterile high-rise flat that resembles a hotel room, sacrificing intimacy for ambition, Ryota is essentially a fall guy, set up to be knocked down and then redeemed. Yudai, the affable agent of his deliverance, lives in the scruffier part of town, and point for point displays the earthy qualities the entitled salaryman lacks: where Ryota insists on the proper way to cook



Have I got news for you: Shogen Whang, Lily Franky, Keita Ninomiya

noodles (and Midori frets over cholesterol), Yudai unrepentantly tucks into beer and chips; where Ryota subjects his presumptive son to gruelling piano lessons, Yudai rolls around with his brood in a shopping-mall playground.

Kore-eda cribbs the device of two antithetical households from his 2011 film *I Wish*, concerning brothers who scheme to reconcile divorced parents. But there, one is never steered into picking a side – the careworn mother and deadbeat father are equally worthy of love. Here the easy ganging-up on cold fish Ryota evinces an alarming failure in human sympathy. Reciprocally, Yudai's idealisation as a life force leads us to challenge his credentials. Is free-spirited loafing really a stronger basis for child welfare than industrious breadwinning?

When natural son Ryusei instinctively rejects

Ryota for democratic everyman Yudai, it's apparent that Kore-eda intends a modernising fable. He remains traditional enough to skimp on the characterisation of the women, who are largely relegated to hand-wringing and commiserating at the fringes of the story while the daddies battle it out. He nonetheless demonstrates his usual élan in framing beautiful images that cut together crisply. Ryota's climactic hatchet-burying with Keita is very neatly staged through alternate glimpses of the injured parties, resolving in a hug and a simultaneous two-shot. Intermittently, Ozu-like pillow shots – of clouds, a stream, a pair of half-drunk plastic cups – suspend the action for reminders of universal transience. They would reverberate more if the thinking behind the film were not ultimately so conventional. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Matsuzaki Kaoru
Taguchi Hijiri

Written by

Kore-eda Hirokazu

Director of Photography

Takimoto Mikiya

Edited by

Kore-eda Hirokazu

Production Designer

Mitsumatsu Keiko

Music

Matsumoto Junichi

Mori Takashi

Matsubara Takeshi

Sound

Tsurumaki Yutaka

Costume Designer

Kurosawa Kazuko

Production Companies

A Fuji Television

Network, Inc.,
Amuse Inc. and
Gaga Corporation

presentation of a Film, Inc.

production

Chief Executive Producers

Chihiro Kameyama

Tatsuro Hatanaka

Tom Yoda

Executive Producers

Yasushi Ogawa
Chiaki Harada
Satomi Odake

Cast

Fukuyama Masaharu

Nonomiya Ryota

Ono Machiko

Nonomiya Midori

Maki Yoko

Saiki Yukari

Lily Franky
Saiki Yudai
Shogen Whang
Ryusei Saiki
Keita Ninomiya
Keita Yukari

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Arrow Films

Japanese
theatrical title
Soshite chichi
ni naru

Tokyo, the present. Workaholic architect Nonomiya Ryota lives in an expensive flat with his wife Midori and six-year-old son Keita. When the boy registers for primary school, a blood test casts doubt on his parentage. DNA tests confirm that a mix-up occurred at the hospital where Keita was born, and that he is in fact the child of shopkeeper Saiki Yudai and his wife Yukari. The working-class couple have been raising the Nonomiyas' biological son Ryusei as their own, along with two other siblings. The families join forces to sue the hospital, and try to decide what should happen to the boys. Weekend visits are arranged, and Keita adapts more readily to the casual lifestyle of the Saikis than Ryusei does to the stricter regime in the Nonomiya home. Ryota consults his lawyer about the possibility of gaining custody of both children – if

necessary by showing Yudai and Yukari to be unfit parents. He attempts to buy off the Saikis, but they are deeply insulted by his proposal. In court, the nurse who attended the two births confesses that she switched the babies in revenge for difficulties with her own stepchildren. The Nonomiyas and Saikis win the suit. After talking with his father about the importance of bloodlines, Ryota resolves to give up Keita. The exchange of the two sons is finally made. An unhappy Ryusei runs away from the Nonomiyas; he eventually starts to bond with them, but admits his desire to reunite with the Saikis. Ryota is intensely moved on discovering some photographs Keita took of him while he slept. He returns Ryusei to the Saikis, but Keita now feels estranged from him and runs away. The two are reconciled and everyone celebrates in the Saiki family shop.

Love, Marilyn

USA/France 2012
Director: Liz Garbus
Certificate 12A 107m 26s

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer


The opening credits for Liz Garbus's documentary drop in the title's telling comma. Just before the film proper begins, the audience is cued that the narrative is going to shift between an examination of 'loving Marilyn' to reading Monroe's inscription of herself. As a range of performers bring Monroe's private writing to life, the film oscillates between a love letter to, and from, Marilyn. The diaries, letters and to-do lists reveal a canny, thoughtful artist in the process of constructing herself and reckoning with sexism and celebrity, and are a gift to the documentarian.

Evoking all that in performance is more hit-and-miss: the flat greenscreen shoots are sustained best by performers such as Ellen Burstyn, Glenn Close, Viola Davis, Jennifer Ehle, Janet McTeer, Marisa Tomei and Lili Taylor, whose experience in a range of character and/or stage work makes them more dynamic and playful in interpretation. By contrast, Uma Thurman's vainglorious vamping reveals, in its failure, just how complex a balance Monroe struck as a female lead and comedienne. Seeing older actors such as Burstyn and McTeer, and actors of colour Davis and Tomei, further highlights the disjunction between the static icon of Monroe as 'blonde bombshell' and the depth and range of both her personality and screen persona. They highlight the disruptive, often mocked and excluded Monroe, the autodidact from a working-class immigrant background who was, as Garbus's detailed account of her production company reveals, trying to change the rules.

Garbus intercuts these performances with readings about Monroe written by Elia Kazan, Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer and Gloria Steinem. One feels that Mailer, in particular, is being sent up for his self-aggrandising claims to understand Monroe, but the repeated use of his account in the film lends it an unfortunate weight. Interviews with both film critics and

those who knew Monroe, especially Amy Greene, wife of Monroe's production partner and regular photographer Milton Greene, are more successful at complementing and framing the fragments of Monroe's voice. One particularly revealing passage crosscuts between Miller's writing and interviews at the time and later in life, and Monroe's account of their marriage and its break-up, revealing Miller to be contradictory at best and hypocritical at worst, not least when he remarks nastily that she "cooperated with her persecutors".

Uncannily and movingly, the film enables Monroe to answer back. Like the star, it times its reveals and reversals wittily, following the fact that her Hollywood therapist Ralph Greenson, clearly still under the spell of countertransference, called himself the "good father" and "most important person in her life" with the counter-fact that Monroe responded to his therapy by reading Freud's letters. At every turn, she refuses passivity and exhibits an intellectual lucidity to match the famous luminosity that makes her stand out, her face open and shining, from the far corner of the back row in a photograph of Lee Strasberg's Method class.

In contrast to Mailer's salacious and objectifying reading, Monroe's diary suggests that she was in control of her body's signification – "my bare/derrière/in the hospital air", she jokes in one of her poems – training with Mabel Todd's classic 1937 dancer's manual *The Thinking Body*. Burstyn's reading from Todd's book, and shots of passages annotated by Monroe, conjure her in a way that endlessly reproduced photo-shoots cannot, reconfiguring the body, all wiggle and dimple, that is so well known we can barely see it. Garbus also reframes that other manifestation of Monroe's body, its lonely death, by making it the film's opening rather than its close. Instead of the ghoulish spectacle, the film brings Monroe's dashing signature vividly to life. 

Machete Kills


Director: Robert Rodriguez

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

Machete Kills is knowingly disposable – so much so that it opens with a trailer for its own follow-up, *Machete Kills Again... in Space*, which is evidently, like *Critters 4* (1992), *Leprechaun 4* (1996), *Hellraiser: Bloodline* (1996) and *Jason X* (2001), to boldly go into the last refuge for franchises long since devoid of more earthbound ideas. Of course, Robert Rodriguez's 'original' *Machete* (2010) was itself born out of a fake trailer that screened between the Rodriguez/Quentin Tarantino double feature in the schlock-pastiche diptych *Grindhouse* (2007).

So as a sequel to a film expansively reconstructed from a trailer for a non-existent adult 70s actioner whose eponymous, ultraviolent, oversexed hero (played by Danny Trejo) first appeared in Rodriguez's family-friendly *Spy Kids* series, *Machete Kills* comes with something of an identity crisis – which might explain the reflexive presence of double-agents, cloned armies, multiple-personality villains and a chameleonic bounty hunter (played variously by Walton Goggins, Cuba Gooding Jr, Lady Gaga and Antonio Banderas!). Much as Marco Mendez (Demián Bichir) has lost his way – and his mind – trying to work out if he is a cartel boss, a revolutionary or Mexico's first and only undercover spy, the film itself dons (and discards) one subgeneric guise after another with mercurial delirium.

Certainly *Machete Kills* boasts all the bandito badassery, cross-border cartoonishness and gory grotesquery of the first film, but this time around the space-opera preview at the beginning primes us to expect this most grounded of heroes to go, both metaphorically and literally, off the planet. Machete Cortez, now an agent for the US government caught up in a plot to destroy the world, travels through a postmodern landscape whose referential breadth extends beyond the usual retro tough-guy flicks to *Dr Strangelove* (1964), *Moonraker* (1979) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). The casting of Mel Gibson as giggling arch-villain Luther Voz just adds to the madness, even if he eventually merges (thanks to injury) into his titular role in *The Man Without A Face* (1993) – much as Robert De Niro's bent politician in the first *Machete* was to become, however momentarily, a Taxi Driver.

Machete Kills is an endearingly silly mash-up of genre's bargain-bin discards. There is still some commentary on America's exploitation of her southern neighbours to be found here, but this seems as throwaway as everything else 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Stanley Buchthal
Liz Garbus
Amy Hobby

Written by

Liz Garbus

Cinematography

Maryse Alberti

Edited by

Azin Samari

Production Designer

Mike Barton

Music

Philip Sheppard

Sound Recordists

David Hocs
Alan Barker

©Diamond Girl
Production LLC

Production Companies

StudioCanal
presents a Diamond
Girl Production
A Sol's Luncheonette
production
A story about
Marilyn Monroe
A film by Liz Garbus
Executive Producers
Anne Carey
Olivier Courson
Harold Van Lier

Enrique Steiger

Film Extracts
The Prince and the Showgirl (1957)
The Seven Year Itch (1955)
Bus Stop (1956)
Don't Bother to Knock (1952)
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953)
Niagara (1953)
Let's Make It Legal (1951)
Love Nest (1951)
Something's Got to Give (1962)

There's No

Business like Show Business (1954)
Cleopatra (1963)
Monkey Business (1952)
Love Happy (1950)
The Misfits (1961)
Some Like It Hot (1959)

With

Readings by
F. Murray Abraham
Elizabeth Banks
Adrien Brody

Ellen Burstyn

Glenn Close
Hope Davis
Viola Davis
Jennifer Ehle
Ben Foster
Paul Giamatti
Jack Huston
Stephen Lang
Lindsay Lohan
Janet McTeer
Jeremy Piven
Oliver Platt
David Strathairn
Lili Taylor
Uma Thurman
Marisa Tomei

Evan Rachel Wood

In Colour

[L78:1]

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited

9,669ft +0 frames

A biographical portrait of Marilyn Monroe which draws on a recently discovered cache of her private writing – diaries, letters and working notes – to reshape the narrative of her life and persona.

Opening with Monroe's death in 1962, the film returns to her birth in 1926 and relays her self-invention as a performer and the effects of celebrity. Readings from her papers by a range of Hollywood actors are intercut with press and personal photographs, film

clips and interviews with friends Amy Greene and Lois Banner. There are also accounts of Monroe's life (again performed by actors) as purveyed by cultural critics Norman Mailer and Gloria Steinem, and by Elia Kazan, who knew and worked with Monroe, and Arthur Miller, to whom she was married between 1956-61. Monroe biographer Donald Spoto and academics and film critics including Molly Haskell and Thomas Schatz comment on her historical context and continuing symbolism.



Knife on Mars: Amber Heard, Danny Trejo

in a film that simultaneously showcases a large Hispanic cast while playing to every broad Mexican stereotype under the sun. Yet where Rodriguez may lack the subtlety needed to be an effective satirist, his dizzying juxtapositions of cinema's trashiest tropes at times make him a master surrealist. Witness the scene in which Machete cradles a jar containing Mendez's still-beating heart – which is also a bomb detonator – while being driven around in a vehicle expressly modelled on Luke Skywalker's landspeeder ("Yes, I'm a *Star Wars* fan," admits Voz).

Machete Kills may outstay its welcome by some 20 minutes, but as the pro-marijuana President Rathcock (Carlos Estevez, aka Charlie Sheen) might say, this is good shit. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Robert Rodriguez
Aaron Kaufman
Iliana Nikolic
Sergei Bespalov
Alexander
Rodnyansky
Rick Schwartz

Screenplay

Kyle Ward
Story
Robert Rodriguez
Marcel Rodriguez

Director of Photography

Robert Rodriguez

Editors

Robert Rodriguez
Rebecca Rodriguez

Production Designer

Steve Joyner
Music
Carl Thiel
Robert Rodriguez

Sound Design

Paula Fairfield
Costume Designer
Nina Procter

Stunt Coordinators

Troy Brown
Jeffrey J. Dashnaw

©[TBC]

Production Companies

Open Road Films
and AR Films in
association with
Demarest Films
present a Quick
Draw production
in association
with Aldamisa
Entertainment.
Overnight
Productions and
1821 Pictures
Executive
Producers
Boris Teterov
Jere Hausfater
Mark C. Manuel
Paris Kasidokostas
Latsis
Terry Douglas
Anthony Gudas
Sam Englehardt
William D. Johnson
Alfonso Barragan Jr
John Paul Dejoria

Cast

Danny Trejo
Machete Cortez
Michelle Rodriguez
Luz/Shé
Sofia Vergara
Madame
Desdemona
Amber Heard
Miss San Antonio

Carlos Estevez
[i.e. Charlie Sheen]
President Rathcock
Lady Gaga
La Camaleón
Antonio Banderas
El Camaleón
Jessica Alba
Sartana
Demian Bichir
Marcos Mendez
Alexa Vega
Kill Joy
Vanessa Hudgens
Cereza
Cuba Gooding Jr
El Camaleón
William Sadler
Sheriff Doakes
Marko Zaror
Zaror
Mel Gibson
Luther Voz
Walton Goggins
El Camaleón
Tom Savini
Osiris Amanpour

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

After Machete's lover Santana is murdered by weapons smugglers, he is asked by the US president to stop Mexican madman Marcos Mendez launching a missile aimed at Washington. With Agent Miss San Antonio as his handler, Machete tracks Mendez to his base. The trigger for the missile launch is attached to Mendez's heart, with a 24-hour countdown. Machete abducts Mendez, after killing his henchman Zaror and many others. Machete brings Mendez back across the US border, hoping that Luther Voz, who designed the heart detonator, can disarm it. A clone of Zaror kills Mendez, and Voz (with Mendez's heart still beating in a jar) reveals his plot to take off to a space station with a selected crew (possibly to include Machete) while missiles 'purge' the world. Machete escapes, and turns to one-eyed Mexican revolutionary Luz for help in stopping Voz. When Machete's one-time enemy Osiris fails to disarm Mendez's heart but redeems himself by taking a bullet intended for Machete, the latter realises that it was Voz who killed Santana. Machete burns Voz's face in a duel, and defuses the launched missile while riding it through the air. The treacherous Miss San Antonio shoots out Luz's second eye, but is killed by her. Voz brings a frozen Luz aboard his rocket and heads into space. Machete accepts a presidential mission to pursue Voz beyond Earth's orbit.

Mademoiselle C

Director: Fabien Constant
Certificate 12A 92m 57s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

In the world of documentaries, fashion is the new black. Since the blogosphere and celebrity websites anointed fashion as the newest branch of the entertainment business, filmmakers are eager to enlist the large audiences who flocked to 2009's *The September Issue*.

Too bad, then, that Fabien Constant, director of this sleek but trivial piece, seems unable to understand the difference between a documentary and a drawn-out puff piece. Granted, fashion followers all over the world are fascinated by its subject – Carine Roitfeld, the famously feline, spike-heeled ex-editor of *Vogue Paris* and longtime über-stylist for Tom Ford and Mario Testino. But without the benefit of editorial detachment or any intellectual ballast, watching her put together her magazine-tome *CR* resembles the fluffiest of upscale reality-TV shows, an endless limos-and-launches account of 'Rushing Around With Roitfeld'. A series of on-the-wing encounters with designers such as Karl Lagerfeld, Donatella Versace and Alexander Wang provide only platitudinous padding in lieu of insight. There's a promisingly satirical look to the fly-on-the-wall coverage of *CR*'s editorial meetings, where Roitfeld's warm-and-fuzzy fashion banalities ("It's all about the stages of a woman's life") are greeted with the kind of rapturous approval one used to see guyed in fashion-mag TV comedy *Ugly Betty*. Until you realise that the filmmakers, like the magazine staff, are treating her opinions as high-fashion holy writ.

Rather better are a series of photo-shoots where Roitfeld displays her real talent. She has a gimlet eye for creating and selecting images that are both sexy and edgy. Reciting a litany of "No, no, no" at an advertiser-bait shoot celebrating the 'bourgeois slut', you can see how she pushes model, stylist and photographer politely but



Fashion police: Karl Lagerfeld, Carine Roitfeld

relentlessly for hours, until her own standards of eroticised elegance are met. When she works with Tom Ford on a 'creepy-chic' photo-spread featuring a poisoned Park Avenue princess as Snow White, the film leaps momentarily into witty and intelligent life. Ford, perched on scaffolding with his camera, provides a wry narration outlining the shoot's scenario, and the range of influences that he and Roitfeld share. Like so much of their work together, the photo-spread is a sly reworking of 70s tropes, in this instance a Guy Bourdin-style grim fairytale.

Once Ford's smart mouth and sharp eye have vanished from the film, however, one realises how vapid the remaining sequences are. Fashion documentaries need context and character and a few conflicting opinions (sometimes, as in the delightfully mischievous *Ultrasuede: In Search of Halston*, provided by the director) or they are nothing more than glossy PR pieces. What made *The September Issue* hum wasn't its cursory analysis of fashion media but the compelling contrast between chilly editor-in-chief Anna Wintour and the creative eccentric Grace Coddington.

Captivating though Roitfeld often is (especially when she giggles at makeup artist Tom Pecheux's wish that she be reincarnated "as yourself, but with big ankles"), one can't help but wonder at the film's level of fascination with her. She is, after all, a fashion personality, not a designer, so the film can't dig into her process as Wim Wenders did with Yohji Yamamoto in *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* (1989). Nor does she have the editorial or cultural vision as a magazine editor that *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel* (2011) could boast of its famous taste-maker. The film proves only that Roitfeld possesses infallible chic, a taste for provocative image-making and the world's most enviable address book (even Kanye West cuddles up to her at the collections), and that people will buy anything she puts her name to. *Mademoiselle C* affects an insider's cool, yet it's a film as dazzled by its shiny subject as the star-struck party guest who tells an amused Roitfeld that, "I am more excited to meet you than President Obama." **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Eric Hannezo
Vincent Labrune
Guillaume LaCroix
Fabien Constant

Director of Photography

Fabien Constant

Editing

Stephanie Drea

Music

The Shoes
Sound

Raphael Laski

Laurent Rodriguez
Jon Goc
Alexandre Widmer

Production Companies

Black Dynamite
Films and
Tarkovskop present
in association with
Elle Driver a film by
Fabien Constant

In Colour

[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited

8,365ft +8 frames

Carine Roitfeld, stylist and ex-editor of 'Vogue Paris', is followed around the globe during 2012 as she devises concepts and supervises photo-shoots for her new twice-yearly magazine 'CR Fashion Book'. Karl Lagerfeld, Tom Ford, Bruce Weber, Alexander Wang, Donatella Versace and others talk about Roitfeld's unique position in fashion, while Roitfeld discusses her 'porno-chic' signature styling, her groundbreaking 1990s Gucci advertisements and her family. Roitfeld becomes a grandmother. Budget issues threaten the photo-shoots. Tom Ford photographs a 'poisoned fairytale' editorial, and Karl Lagerfeld shoots 1980s supermodels as French actresses of the 1960s. An ambitious Cannes amfAR (Foundation for Aids Research) fashion show that Roitfeld is producing comes together at the last minute. The issue of 'CR' is a success, the 50,000 print-run selling out within two weeks.

Morrissey 25: Live

United Kingdom/USA 2013
Director: James Russell
Certificate PG 92m 0s

Reviewed by Ryan Gilbey

Admirers of Morrissey – the enigmatic singer who has endured a solo career ('enjoyed' seems the wrong word) for 25 years following the break-up of his highly influential band The Smiths – have hardly been starved of live footage of their hero. There have been several undistinguished concert films on video or DVD: *Live in Dallas* (1992), *Introducing Morrissey* (1996) and *Who Put the M in Manchester?* (2005). While the latter received one-off cinema screenings, *Morrissey 25 Live* is the first to get a legitimate theatrical release, which suggests that its director James Russell has up his sleeve some stylistic aces overlooked by previous filmmakers.

Such hopes prove unfounded. Though the film was shot on digital 35mm, it displays no real inventiveness on the level of editing or camera placement. A fisheye lens is occasionally employed. Shots of the audience singing along punctuate the movie pointlessly, every cutaway dissipating the onstage energy; the only area of interest in these moments lies in witnessing the heavy Hispanic and Latino bias among this LA crowd – a trend already scrutinised in William E. Jones's documentary *Is It Really So Strange?* (2004). Russell makes few attempts to advance the vocabulary of the standard concert movie: the camera zooms slowly into the performers from a long shot, and then zooms slowly back out again. *The Last Waltz* and *Stop Making Sense* should find their positions secure on any list of the finest music films ever made. As will *Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience* for that matter.

Give or take the gushing testimonies of fans that bookend the film, *Morrissey 25 Live* is a straight document of the singer's gig at the Hollywood High School earlier this year; the venue holds a tenth of the capacity of the 20,000-seat Staples Center, which he'd played the previous night, so little wonder tickets sold out in 12 seconds. Footage of Russell Brand's onstage introduction has been left on the cutting-room floor (it will be included on the DVD release), as has the pre-gig film on the suffocation of fish. It's debatable which omission should inspire the greatest gratitude.

If only the show itself were more compelling. It's nice that Morrissey tailored the performance to suit the venue, making reference between songs to how one's school days never go away. But it seems perverse that in picking a school-themed opening song he plumped for 'Alma Matters', drab from its punning title downwards, rather than The Smiths' magisterial 'The Headmaster Ritual'. Morrissey has no compunction about sprinkling his set list with Smiths songs: the picture features five, including an overcooked



Man in the white suit: Morrissey

take on 'Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want' which proves that having an insipid cover version included in a John Lewis advertising campaign was manifestly not the worst thing that could happen to that delicate song.

The effect of including Smiths compositions, even when poorly arranged and rendered, is to knock most of the solo material into a cocked hat. Exceptions include the surging 'You Have Killed Me', which namechecks Pasolini and Fellini (the studio version omitted Fellini but included references to Anna Magnani and Visconti). Equally impressive is 'Maladjusted', which is musically abrasive and lyrically parochial; how piquant to hear its mentions of "Fulham Road" and "south-west six" in this Californian context.

It probably doesn't help the film that the singer himself is in one of his most musically moribund periods. His post-Smiths live band (which includes his doughty co-songwriter Boz Boorer, 22 years of service and counting) has never been fabled for its dexterity, trampling songs both good and bad with an equal-opportunities clumsiness. But Morrissey's last album (2009's *Years of Refusal*) was particularly stodgy; now he finds himself without a record contract, and with a trail of cancelled live dates behind him following serious health problems. In this context, perhaps we might forgive the scene in which he surrenders the microphone to audience members, who then compete to deliver the most effusive praise for their idol. Or maybe we should interpret it, and this entire fan-club-style enterprise, as the monstrous display of narcissism it so patently is. ☹

Muscle Shoals

Director: Greg 'Freddy' Camalier

Reviewed by Sam Davies

You may not have heard of Muscle Shoals, a dot on the map of rural Alabama, but you've heard the music recorded there: an extraordinary run of soul and R&B records was produced in the little city under the direction of producer Rick Hall in the 1960s. Percy Sledge, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, Clarence Carter, Etta James, Candi Staton and The Staple Singers all cut classic sides, and its unique sound – the product of Hall's FAME studio and its in-house band The Swampers (whom many artists were astonished to discover were white) – soon drew in musicians from rock and pop: The Rolling Stones, Traffic, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Dylan, Gregg Allman, Paul Simon and countless others.

Greg Camalier, directing his debut feature, shows an impressively sure hand, threading together interviews, anecdotes and narratives as well as getting access to some of the studio's biggest clients (such as Jagger and Richards). He naturally devotes plenty of time to the question of what makes Muscle Shoals so freakishly musically fertile. At times his attempts verge on the hokey: Native American traditions referring to the nearby Tennessee River as 'the river that sings' are invoked to imply that there's literally something in the water, and a tenuous link is made to deaf-blind author and activist Helen Keller's roots in the area. Camalier's photography makes the most persuasive argument for the area itself having some intrinsic magic: the interviews are intercut with extended static shots of the Tennessee, a river almost as vast and slow as the Mississippi, rolling through impossibly green woodland. The landscape sequences are gorgeously evocative of the slow pace of life in a rural backwater. But this only



Soundland: Clarence Carter

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Vicki Bethnavas

Director of

Photography

Nick Wheeler

Editors

Simon Bryant

Nicholas Meddings

Audio Dubbing

Andy Coles

©Whores In

Retirement

Production

Companies

Eagle Rock

Entertainment

presents a Nineteen

Fifteen & ERP

production

Executive Producers

Geoffrey Kempin

Terry Shand

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Distributor

More2Screen

8,280 ft +0 frames

A concert film documenting a performance by Morrissey (formerly of The Smiths) in Los Angeles in March this year. The night after playing the 20,000-capacity Staples Center, Morrissey performs a more intimate show at the city's Hollywood High School. The singer and his band play 19 songs, among them 'Irish Blood, English Heart' and 'Everyday Is Like Sunday', as well as Smiths numbers such as 'Still Ill' and 'The Boy with the Thorn in His Side'.

deepens the enigma. How to connect this mood to The Swampers' explosive urgency on, say, Wilson Pickett's 'Land of 1000 Dances'?

The impression *Muscle Shoals* the film leaves in the end is that Muscle Shoals the place was only special in so far as a handful of people thrown together by chance in the area made it so. Many of the interviewees, black and white, enthuse about the absolute equality that reigned in the confines of the studio. Yet at the same time passing comments make clear that, outside those walls, visiting black artists were not welcome in the town's diners and restaurants. (Why did Wilson Pickett record a cover of 'Hey Jude'? Because, unable to accompany his white collaborators on a food break, he was buttonholed by Gregg Allman – also barred due to his hippie hair – and talked into it.)

Read against the grain, *Muscle Shoals* is as much a documentary about a group as it is a label, such is the importance of The Swampers (Barry Beckett, Jimmy Johnson, David Hood and Roger Hawkins) to its story and sound. Their career is a kind of inverse of the usual band narrative: without ego, without records made under their own name, they remained in their childhood homes. Unlike all the 1960s groups who gave up touring to become studio hermits, they were studio hermits who were finally enticed on to the road (in support of Traffic).

But the key story in the Muscle Shoals history is Rick Hall's. He is the one figure without whom all this would not and could not have happened. He comes across as astute and highly musically sensitive, but above all intensely driven. His personal life was so tragedy-struck as to seem almost cursed, with his father, wife and brother all dying in accidents. Watching Hall recount these dark moments and his own determination to avenge himself on life through success, you can only marvel at how he has managed to sublimate the grief and anger into music that was so often the opposite: three-minute explosions of irresistible joy. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Stephen Badger Greg 'Freddie' Camalier	Re-recording mixer Christopher Koch	Camalier
Director of Photography Anthony Arendt	Production Companies Ear Goggles Productions	In Colour
Edited by Richard Lowe	Executive Producers Stephen Badger Greg 'Freddie'	Distributor Dogwoof
Music Supervisor Jill Meyer		

A documentary telling the story of Muscle Shoals, a small town in Alabama which from the 1960s became a major location on the map of American pop music. Producer Rick Hall set up the FAME recording studio there in 1960 and, as the decade progressed, his sound and the in-house band that made it, The Swampers, were increasingly in demand. A long collaboration with Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records led to artists such as Wilson Pickett and Aretha Franklin making defining records in Muscle Shoals; other artists and labels soon followed. The Swampers split from Hall in 1969 to set up their own studio, but despite the acrimony, both sides found enormous success into the 70s and 80s, as they expanded from producing R&B, soul and country into rock and pop.

NFA

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Steve Rainbow

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

There but for the grace of God goes any one of us, argues this earnest micro-budget take on the theme of homelessness. Flashbacks link a man's affluent and ordinary past with his isolated and helpless present, showing how encroaching mental instability has robbed him of his job, home and family. It's a structure that nods towards those paranoid millennial thrillers in which comforts fall suddenly away and identity itself proves far from reliable – *The Game* (1997), *Memento* (2000), *Mulholland Dr.* (2001).

No such wit or shine here. This is not only a very low-budget project but also a very straightforward and somewhat flat-footed one, though points about the cruel efficiency with which a society can shut someone out are effectively made. Without change in his pockets or the ability to prove his identity, our protagonist Adam is powerless. Once he's regarded by the police as a suspect character, they simply tune him out and refuse to hear what he's saying; begging, in desperation, he's treated as invisible by passers-by.

Many of the film's participants have themselves endured periods of homelessness, and the experiences that befall Adam are largely drawn from real-life anecdotes. However, the awkward presentation and amateurish performances from professional and non-professional cast alike make it a challenge from the start to believe that any of this is happening in the real world. A good film in the moral sense; an admirable, diligent but flawed one in the creative sense. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Anna Savill Justin Edgar Alex Usborne	Trust, Felix Dennis Made with the support of the UK Film Council's Development Fund	In Colour [1.85:1]
Written by Steve Rainbow		Distributor Ballpark Film Distributors
Director of Photography Flemming Jetmar	Cast Patrick Baladi Adam Smith David Sterne Old John Saskia Butler Jane Smith Simon Lowe Dan Laurence Saunders PC Mullen Vicky Roberts Grace Sean Connolly Charlie David Proud Graham Ava Baladi Holly Smith	
Film Editor Philip Arkinstall		
Production Designer Annabelle Bevan		
Music Alex Baranowski		
Sound Recordist Todd Richardson		
©104 Films Ltd		
Production Companies 104 films presents a Steve Rainbow film Assisted with the generous support of WED Charitable		

Birmingham, the present. Adam awakes in a homeless shelter. The last thing he remembers is celebrating his birthday with wife Jane and daughter Holly. Finding that he has no money, he walks home but Jane isn't there. He goes to the police but is told that he isn't registered at his home address. He sleeps rough and is robbed of his shoes. Outreach workers find him a space in a B&B but warn that the rules for securing accommodation are complicated. A dream reminds him that Jane has gone to her sister's for a few days. Leaving the hostel, he finds Jane and Holly there to meet him. Jane indicates that all this has happened before.

9.79*

USA/United Kingdom/Brazil/Australia/
The Netherlands 2012
Director: Daniel Gordon, Certificate PG 82m 53s

Reviewed by Thomas Dawson

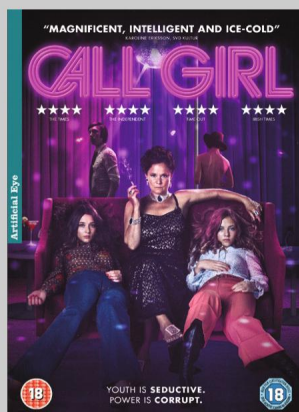
The men's 100m final at the 1988 Seoul Olympics was, according to the title of a recent book by Richard Moore, "the dirtiest race in history". Not only was the Canadian winner and world record holder Ben Johnson disqualified and stripped of his gold medal within three days, after testing positive for anabolic steroids, but five of the other seven competitors were also at some stage in their athletic careers implicated in doping scandals (America's Calvin Smith and Brazil's Robson da Silva being the two honourable exceptions). Carl Lewis, who was promoted to first place in lieu of Johnson, was found to have taken illegal stimulants during the 1988 US trials for the Olympics: due to receive a three-month ban, which would have ruled him out of the finals, he was let off by the authorities with a mere warning. (The precise details of the case only emerged in 2003.) Britain's Linford Christie, who originally finished third in Seoul, was himself to serve a two-year drug-related ban in the 1990s, having tested positive for Nandrolone.

One of the strengths of British director Daniel Gordon's documentary (which has already been transmitted on BBC TV in an abridged version titled *The Race That Shocked the World*) is that he has succeeded in interviewing all eight of the participants from the final, who are filmed in their respective countries. It's clear that although the race itself lasted barely ten seconds, the repercussions of that September night a quarter of a century ago have haunted their lives. Moreover, the subjective memories of the individuals involved – together with the raft of allegations, denials and counterclaims – undermine the notion of a definitive historical 'truth'.

Through an effective combination of archival footage and personal testimonies, Gordon demonstrates how the Seoul final was the culmination of a bitter rivalry between Johnson and Lewis, which had developed over several years and been enthusiastically fanned by the world's sports media. The middle-class Lewis was the flamboyant American, winner of four gold medals at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and a man whose arrogance did little to endear him to his fellow competitors. The hulking **S**



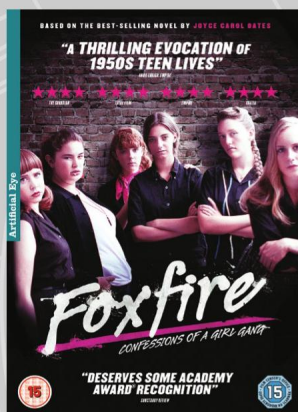
Inside track: 9.79*



Mikael Marcimain
Call Girl

A slick, sexy slice of top-class Nordic Noir from the creators of 'Wallander', 'The Hunt' and 'A Royal Affair', this portrait of corrupt politicians and the seedy underworld that threatens to bring them down is both an edge-of-your-seat political thriller and an engrossing character study.

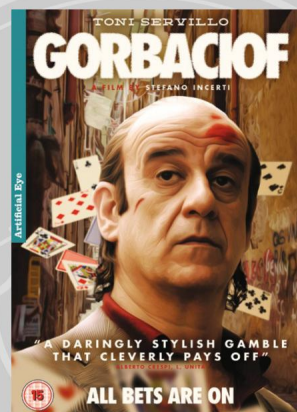
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& ON DEMAND 28 OCTOBER



Laurent Cantet
Foxfire

The brand new English language feature from Laurent Cantet, the Palme d'Or winning director of 'The Class', 'Foxfire' is a gripping character-led coming-of-age tale following in the footsteps of intense, engrossing dramas like 'Stand By Me' and 'The Outsiders'.

AVAILABLE ON DVD
& ON DEMAND 11 NOVEMBER



Stefano Incerti
Gorbaciof

Built around a powerful, award-winning performance from Toni Servillo (The Great Beauty, Gomorrah) this riveting thriller about a prison cashier in Naples who finds himself sucked into a dangerous world of high-stakes poker is a subtle, stylish and intelligent work from Italy's most promising new director.

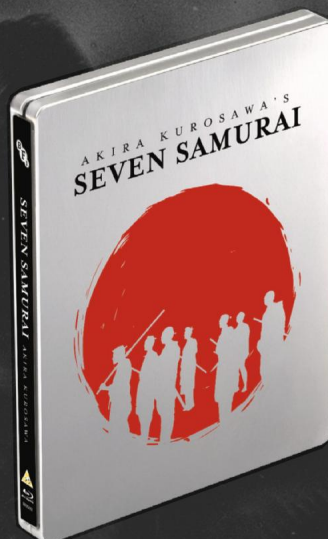
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Johnson, the poor Jamaican immigrant to Canada, had a much less polished public persona owing to his natural shyness and speech impediment. Even their running styles were diametrically opposed: the graceful, long-limbed Lewis, who would ease past opponents in the second half of races, versus the muscular power of Johnson, who would explode out of the starting blocks like a bullet fired from a gun.

Avoiding a simplistic hero-villain dichotomy between these two sprinters, *9.79** widens its scope to portray a win-at-all-costs athletic culture, which by the Seoul games was awash with performance-enhancing drugs. Gordon interviews coaches, drug testers (notably Don Catlin, who now runs the Anti-Doping Research organisation), Olympic officials, lawyers and journalists, and also includes archive clips of, among others, Robert Kerr, the Californian doctor who supplied athletes with human growth hormones, extracted from cadavers, during the 1980s. As Dr Jamie Astaphan, the 'drugs doctor' who supplied Johnson, pointed out to his client: "If you don't take it, you won't make it." Kerr and Astaphan are both now deceased; the mysterious Andre Jackson, whom Johnson alleges doctored his sample in the Seoul testing-room, refused to participate in the film, releasing an ambiguous written statement that declared: "Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't."

Included in *9.79** is footage from the Dubin Inquiry, a Canadian government investigation into the use of drugs in athletics, carried out in 1989. Its 600-page report talked of the "moral crisis" in relation to elite sport and illegal drugs. The recent high-profile cases of cyclist Lance Armstrong – the subject of Alex Gibney's forthcoming documentary – and the Jamaican sprinters Asafa Powell and Sherone Simpson suggest that this crisis has by no means passed. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Daniel Gordon	ESPN Films presents a Very Much So and Terra Vermelha	Filmes: Gideon Boulting
Written by Daniel Gordon Nicholas Packer	Filmes production in association with Passion Pictures	Narrator David Harewood
Directors of Photography Charlie Grainger Nick Bennett	A BBC, ESPN Films, SBS, VPRO	In Colour [1.78:1]
Edited by Nicholas Packer	co-production With the support of Tribeca Film Institute	Distributor Kaleidoscope Entertainment
Original Music Tim Attack	Executive Producers for BBC: Charlotte Moore Maxine Watson for VPRO: Barbara Truyen	7,459 ft +8 frames
Location Sound Andy Boag Stevie Haywood Simon Reynell	for Passion Pictures: John Battsek for Terra Vermelha	
©ESPN Inc. Production Companies		

A documentary about the men's 100m final at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson won the race in 9.79 seconds, breaking the world record, but was disqualified three days later for having tested positive for anabolic steroids, and the gold medal was awarded to his American rival Carl Lewis. The film includes archive footage and recent interviews with all eight athletes who participated in the race, as well as with various coaches, doctors, drug testers, Olympic officials, journalists and lawyers.

The Nun

France/Germany/Belgium 2013
Director: Guillaume Nicloux
Certificate 12A 111m 56s



Dark habits: Pauline Etienne, Isabelle Huppert

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

The Nun, directed by Guillaume Nicloux, is an adaptation of Diderot's controversial eponymous novel, published posthumously in 1796. It joins a small but distinguished band of French films about nuns, in particular Robert Bresson's 1943 *Angels of Sin* and Alain Cavalier's 1986 *Thérèse*. But its more obvious predecessor is Jacques Rivette's 1966 film, also based on Diderot and a *succès de scandale* when it was banned for several years on the grounds of anticlericalism. Yet, while Diderot undoubtedly used *The Nun* to decry the abuses of power perpetrated by the Catholic Church, the novelty of the book resided as much, if not more, in its depiction of lesbian desire, an aspect more or less absent from Rivette's version. In this respect Nicloux updates *The Nun*, via a

flamboyant performance in the last third of the film by Isabelle Huppert as a mother superior.

Despite adding a framing story and taking a few other liberties with the text that are bound to displease Diderot specialists, Nicloux generally follows the novel in charting the terrifying trajectory of a young woman, Suzanne Simonin (Pauline Etienne), who is, as he has put it, "the victim of an oppressive, patriarchal regime, which still exists in many parts of the world because of religious fanatics". Suzanne also illustrates the lack of power of the impecunious bourgeoisie in 18th-century France: without a dowry she cannot marry, but her class prevents her from working. Her parents accordingly send her to a convent, although it is revealed that this decision is also motivated by her being illegitimate. After Suzanne shockingly refuses to

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Sylvie Pialat Benoît Quainon	Belle Epoque Films, Versus Production, Rhône-Alpes Cinéma, France 3 Cinéma	Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (Mini-Traité)	Union, Procirep and Angoa-Agicoo	Marie convent	Fabrizio Rongione
Screenplay Guillaume Nicloux Jérôme Beaujour	Based on the novel <i>La Religieuse</i> by Denis Diderot	With the support of MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, Deutscher Filmförderfonds, Mini-Traité Filmförderungsanstalt, Tax Shelter du Gouvernement Fédéral Belge, Inver Invest, Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and VOO	Developed with the support of Media Programme of the European Union, Procirep and Angoa-Agicoo, Worso Développement, Cofinova	Mme. Simonin, Suzanne's mother	Pierre Nisse
Director of Photography Yves Cape	Companies Les Films du Worso presents a Les Films du Worso, Belle Epoque Films, Versus Production	In co-production with Gifted Films, Rhône-Alpes Cinéma, France 3 Cinéma, Cinefeel, Hérodias, RTBF (Télévision belge), Belgacom	Co-production with the support of Eurimages	Sister Thérèse	Marquis de Croismare
Editor Guy Lecorne	Production Designer Olivier Radot	In association with Sofica Manon 2	Puissance Quatre, Manon Production	Alice de Lencquesaing	In Colour [1.85:1]
Music Max Richter	Sound Olivier Dô Hùu Julie Brenta	With the support of France Télévisions, Canal+, Ciné+, Le Pacte, Région Rhône-Alpes,		Gilles Cohen	Subtitles
Costume Designer Anais Romand				M. Simonin, Suzanne's father	Distributor Metrodome Distribution Ltd
				Marc Barbé	10,074 ft +0 frames
				Father Castella	French theatrical title <i>La Religieuse</i>
				François Négret	
				Maitre Manouri, lawyer	
				Lou Castel	
				Baron de Lassel	
				Nicolas Jouhet	
				priest at the Sainte Marie convent	
				Pascal Bongard	
				Archdeacon	

France, the 1760s. The elderly Baron de Lassel gives his young son a manuscript to read. It contains the memoirs of Suzanne Simonin, whose story is then told in flashback.

Against her will, Suzanne is sent to a convent at the age of 17 allegedly because her parents are ruined after arranging the marriages of her two older sisters. Lacking religious vocation, Suzanne refuses to take her vows, provoking a scandal, and is sent home. After she learns from her mother that she is illegitimate, she agrees to return to the convent, where the tolerant mother superior Madame de Moni encourages her to become a nun

despite her inclination. After Madame de Moni's death, the sadistic young new mother superior, Sister Christine, persecutes Suzanne, especially when she learns that Suzanne has petitioned the Pope to annul her vows. The increasingly cruel treatment makes Suzanne seriously ill, attracting the attention of the bishop; although her petition is denied, Suzanne is moved to another convent thanks to a lawyer, Maître Manouri. There, however, the innocent Suzanne becomes the object of the mother superior's lesbian desire. With help from a priest and Manouri, Suzanne escapes and is rescued by the Baron de Lassel, her real father, who dies shortly after.

One Direction This Is Us

USA/United Kingdom 2013

Director: Morgan Spurlock

Certificate PG 92m 15s

Reviewed by Calum Marsh

Early on in Morgan Spurlock's *One Direction: This Is Us*, a montage of global soft-shoe reportage testifies to the eponymous boy band's stratospheric ascendancy – the record-breaking sales figures, the armies of fans. "Not even the Beatles had this much success..." one particularly zealous talking head enthuses – a dramatic pause underscores our scepticism – "...this early in their career." Ah, right. Certainly, few artists can boast of recording two double-platinum albums when they're barely old enough to celebrate over champagne, but even the most impressive rock-star precocity is no guarantee that a legacy will endure. *This Is Us*, perhaps unsurprisingly, seems all too delighted to fixate on both the spontaneity and intensity of One Direction's recent success, lionising them as peerless matinee idols whose fame today apparently precludes (or merely eclipses) any doubts that it will remain. On the question of longevity, I suppose we must wait and see.

As we do not have, say, a high-gloss Boyzone documentary of similar overconfidence to look back on with embarrassment, it becomes rather easy to regard One Direction, at least in their platonic form depicted here, as a phenomenon without precedent. If you are over the age of 17 and don't have a child or sibling that age or younger, the worldwide pre-eminence of a band you've otherwise never heard of may come as something of a revelation. And yet this reaction may be a sophisticated function of the film's shrewd conceptual strategy: because it takes for granted the universality of One Direction's fame – tirelessly reiterating the fervency of their fanbase and the scope of their appeal – this conception becomes in a sense self-sustaining. To the dedicated fans who represent the film's target demographic, One Direction are already the most important pop act in the world – that much is attested to by the throngs of shrieking, tear-stained 'Directioners' on camera. But to those not in the know, wilfully ignorant of contemporary pop culture, One Direction as an



Simon says: *One Direction*

idea means nothing in and of itself. Is this, in fact, the biggest band in the universe? I haven't the slightest idea, admittedly. The film recognises this pliancy of opinion and seizes upon it.

It is hardly an interesting criticism to accuse a thinly veiled promotional video like *This Is Us* of duplicity or misdirection. A certain deference to the party line is to be expected – this is, after all, 'us', produced by the band's management team and precisely calibrated to maximise their decorous public image. But a documentary this laboriously obsequious inevitably poses questions of purpose and intent. That an audience exists for this sort of thing seems a given. What's less obvious is what, if anything, that audience stands to gain from the experience – what is it a One Direction fan hopes to find in *This Is Us*, other than simply them? Candour is off the table, of course. This could not be further from the motive or tenor of exposé.

The film endeavours, with something like rigour, to affect a kind of flippancy at all times in the presence of its stars, shooting them as if the camera had somehow wandered into a private setting with the 'record' button jammed on. This gels nicely with how they, or they by way of management, would like to be perceived. I'd estimate that roughly 70 per cent of the running time is devoted to proving the band's natural insouciance. We find them in various states of repose, lounging about or goofing off, shooting the breeze like regular blokes – normality, or the illusion thereof, is of the utmost importance to One Direction. In between encounters with rabid fans and luxury bus rides between sold-out stadium venues, the down-to-earth dispositions of five normal lads are affirmed to the point of absurdity. They are "normal guys", "just regular guys", "totally cool and normal", unaffected by their millions of dollars and lavish globetrotting lifestyles and acclimatisation to celebrity excess. Fans of a group this popular need to be reassured that their idols are not insufferable, I suppose. And the band, if the film is to be believed, need to be reassured of their fans: those anonymous faces, makeup smudged and mouths ovular, are said to sustain them. Is it any surprise that the fans are duly exalted? They deserve as much – they're paying for this. ☹

take her vows in front of the congregation, her mother (Martina Gedeck) asks her to expiate the 'sin' of her birth by agreeing to become a nun.

The film then divides roughly into three parts that correspond to three mother superiors clearly meant to demonstrate three types of abuse at the hands of the Church. The first, Madame de Moni (Françoise Lebrun), embodies gentle coercion: a wise and kind woman, she nevertheless manipulates Suzanne into becoming a nun against her will. The second, Sister Christine (Louise Bourgoin), is a sadist worthy of the Inquisition: she makes Suzanne wear a hair shirt, beats her and deprives her of food and even sanitation. The third, the Saint Eutrope mother superior (Huppert), illustrates how the enforcement of chastity combined with a cloistered, female-only existence, leads not only to lesbianism but also to madness.

The fact that excess and abuse are embodied by women while rational thinking and the law are represented by men – the lawyer Manouri (François Négret) and a priest, Père Castella (Marc Barbé) – may at first sight appear misogynist. Yet the film, like the novel, shows these abuses to be the result of power and class structures that are ultimately patriarchal. Moreover, the quality of the script and performances endows the female characters with a considerable degree of strength and agency, and this makes the spectator aware of their predicament – with the exception perhaps of Sister Christine, whose relentless cruelty, oddly magnified by her youth and beauty, is one-dimensional. On the other hand, Lebrun, known for her role in *The Mother and the Whore* (1973), is a very nuanced Madame de Moni. The young and relatively unknown Etienne is extremely impressive as Suzanne, the innocence of her round, soft features and pale eyes combining with her ability to convey strength and rebelliousness; despite suffering so many ordeals, Suzanne never behaves as a victim. Huppert, known for her 'extreme' roles, manages to project both the quasi-hysterical physical desire of the mother superior and her need for affection, thus avoiding caricature. Huppert also succeeds in suggesting the distance and sardonic humour present in the Diderot text, preventing these scenes from falling into homophobia.

Superb in themselves, the performances are also effective because Nicloux's style is at once evocative of the period and modern. If the framing story and the brief scenes at Suzanne's parents' home belong to classic heritage cinema and are arguably too opulent given Suzanne's supposed poverty, the convent scenes are filmed in a pared-down, naturalistic way (contrasting with Rivette's theatricality and also with Nicloux's own previous work in popular thrillers). But the modernity of the film is, ultimately, down to Diderot. For Nicloux, *The Nun* "was not against religion, but against religious fanaticism"; it is "an ode to liberty". Interestingly, although he did not suffer the censorship that afflicted Rivette, Nicloux had to shoot the convent scenes in Germany. "In France," he says, "we had refusals for the sets because of the subject of the film" – showing that Diderot's text has lost none of its power or relevance. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Simon Cowell

Adam Milano

Morgan Spurlock

Ben Winston

Director of

Photography

Tom Krueger

Editor

Pierre Takal

Original Score

Simon Franglen

Documentary

Sound Recordist

Mark Atkinson

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Industries, Inc.

Production

Companies

TriStar Pictures
presents a Syco
Entertainment/
Modest! production
in association with
Warrior Poets/
Fulwell 73

Executive

Producers

Richard Griffiths

Harry Magee

Will Bloomfield

Doug Merrifield

Jeremy Chilnick

Matthew Galkin

Dolby Digital/

SDDS/Datasat

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

Sony Pictures

Releasing

8,302 ft +8 frames

A documentary following the band One Direction on their first international tour. The film includes footage of the band's concerts around the world, as well as behind-the-scenes glimpses of the band members' lives before and after their discovery on the television talent show 'The X Factor'.

On Landguard Point

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Robert Pacitti
Certificate PG 86m 22s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

On Landguard Point is a feature-film spin-off from a series of events, performances and artworks held in the summer of 2011, masterminded by Robert Pacitti, credited here as the director and narrator, and fuelled by numerous local artists and performers. Many stagings took place in the vicinity of Landguard Point in Suffolk, a setting of obvious symbolic importance since it was the site of the last land repulsion of an attempted invasion of England (in 1667), it's been officially designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the diversity of its flora and fauna, it's very close to the port of Felixstowe (the UK's main trade gateway) and it also offers more traditional seaside pleasures. In short, it's easy to see why it was chosen as a one-stop representative of the East of England, the film's central theme.

Although the region has already had several cinematic appraisals, including Ken Annakin's *Fenlands* in 1946 and Grant Gee's *Patience (After Sebald)* in 2012, they adopted a narrower focus on specific aspects. By contrast, Pacitti and his collaborators are attempting a much more comprehensive trawl through the region's history, culture, song, dance, biology, geography, topology, geology and architecture, and doing so for the most part with next to no words spoken on screen: orientation points come via six themed and headed 'chapters', Pacitti's own somewhat self-consciously poetic voiceover, and messages conveyed by a number of scrolling dot-matrix

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Nicola Galliani	Costume Designer Lucille Acevedo Jones	Robert Pacitti narrator
Texts Robert Pacitti Sheila Ghelani	@Pacitti Company	In Colour [1.78:1]
Cinematography Becky Edmunds Lucy Cash	Production Companies A film by Pacitti Company	Distributor The Pacitti Company
Edited by Hoping Chen	Executive producer: Pacitti Company	7.773ft +0 frames
Original Music Michael Nyman	Supported using public funding by Arts Council England	
Original Sound Mark Peter Wright		

Divided into six chapters, the film records performances and happenings taking place on and around Landguard Point, Suffolk, in 2011.

'The Call'. A woman emerges from the sea, dons a bandsman's outfit and joins a passing brass band.

'The Port and the Point'. Landguard Fort is offset by the nearby port of Felixstowe. Random objects are collected and regarded as 'treasure'. Clowns, dancers and other performers converge on the pier.

'An Edible Compass'. Regional symbols are fashioned in thread, iron and cake. Past inhabitants are commemorated, including women burned as witches and former Lieutenant-Governor Philip Thicknesse. Two marching bands take turns to perform.

'Live Trade'. A falcon is released into the wild, as is a freight train, birds tagged by the Landguard Bird Observatory and a flock of pigeons. A group of protesters carry the cryptic sign 'NØ'. A woman disgorges small metal trinkets from her mouth.

'Dig'. Various group performances include a cappella singing by women dressed in black. People dig the ground for both planting and archaeological exploration.

'Sow'. Black flags bearing gold symbols are raised and lowered. Symbolic metal artefacts are buried in the ground for future generations to find.



Suffolkore: On Landguard Point

displays that seemingly draw their power from the watery depths of a fen. Otherwise, links are formed by visual and aural echoes: a trombone mimics the sound of a lighthouse; synchronised swimmers are lit to look like flickering flames; the pose of a man holding a flare is echoed by the cranes in the background; and stacks of shipping containers at Felixstowe are as colourful as any balloons or ribbons on display on Clacton Pier.

Michael Nyman's characteristic score, alternately chugging and lyrical, isn't the only thing that offers a strong reminder of Peter Greenaway's early work: there are also some highly symmetrical compositions, recourse to numerology as the basis for both individual sequences and the film's structure as a whole, a fondness for ornate costume (and frontal nudity) and a keen sense of very English eccentricity, best displayed in the sequence in which cakes imaginatively depict buildings representing each of the region's six counties (Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk). The geographical significance of the number six is established early enough to make its recurrence easy to interpret, although the precise function of some of the other symbols requires either local knowledge or a perusal of the film's website. Unavoidably, the attached synopsis conveys structure more than content.

Given that the various community arts projects from which the film draws its imagery originated as a series of live events staged as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, and more specifically that the contributors ran the gamut from professional artists to enthusiastic amateurs to children, *On Landguard Point* proves to be a surprisingly coherent viewing experience when boiled down to a single linear film. However, Pacitti's evident inexperience as a filmmaker occasionally tells: although he concocts plenty of striking images (considerably abetted by Mark Peter Wright's elaborate sound design, alert to everything from bird calls to the rhythmic whumping of shovelfuls of earth hitting the ground), there are occasional longueurs, and this ultimately doesn't measure up to Greenaway, Derek Jarman or Patrick Keiller in their prime. Its natural home may prove to be DVD or Blu-ray, which will allow viewers to explore their favourite thematic byways at greater leisure. **S**

Prince Avalanche

USA 2012
Director: David Gordon Green
Certificate 15 93m 29s

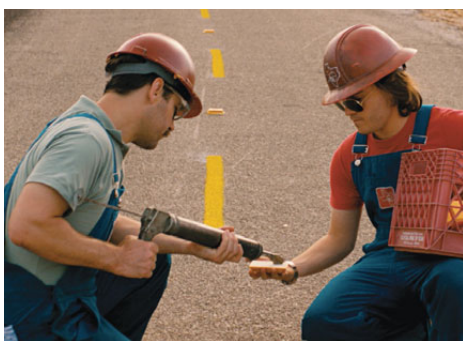
Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Conventional critical wisdom seems to take an almost Manichean view of Arkansas filmmaker David Gordon Green, whose early Malick-infused small-town character studies *George Washington* (2000) and *All the Real Girls* (2003) are regarded with a beatific glow – in marked contrast to the intensifying dismay that has met his Hollywood progression through stoner action-comedy (*Pineapple Express*, 2008), lowbrow medieval farce (*Your Highness*, 2011) and pottymouth adolescent knockabout (*The Sitter*, 2011).

Green's career trajectory takes an unexpected yet far from unwelcome turn, however, with this indie-scaled, rather funky buddy pic, knocked out fast and cheap in a Texas national park ravaged by destructive wildfires. Setting the story in the late 1980s – essentially following a previous real-life conflagration – grounds the action within a credible context for bickering duo Paul Rudd and Emile Hirsch, who play highway repairmen charged with repainting the lines on the local roads. Landing them in the country on their own, their situation allows the manly tropes of Rudd's would-be self-mythologising outdoorsmanship and Hirsch's crass hornbog gaucherie to be effectively unpacked and reassembled in time-honoured three-act fashion.

At which point it's only fair to mention that the central characters and key plot points originate in Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson's 2011 Icelandic festival favourite *Either Way*, though this is one instance where the US remake proves far superior to the foreign-language original. The sheer craft of Messrs Rudd and Hirsch is one key factor, generating far more in the way of colour and emotion than their Icelandic forebears. Rudd, for instance, is simply impeccable in the way he sets up his character Alvin's frontiersman pretensions for a comic fall yet remains touchingly true to the genuine pathos of a man who has for too long used his isolated workplace as a refuge from the awkward realities of unravelling relationships. Hirsch in turn finds unexpected layers in the empty braggadocio of Alvin's workmate Lance, hinting at a longing for connection and commitment that might yet stand this half-formed young man in good stead.

Green's screenplay adaptation is deftly handled, creating a richer palette than the source material by knowing what to leave unsaid, confident that the actors will deliver the deepening emotions. What's also strikingly individual is how Green uses the blackened landscape not just as an ironic elemental contrast to the human foibles on display but as something genuinely otherworldly. The tonal agenda set by the collaborative score from David Wingo and Explosions in the Sky, which plays earthy acoustic vibes against spookily sustained electric guitars, teasingly suggests an additional supernatural element, so that the passing presence of a slightly unhinged truck driver and a housewife trawling the burned detritus of a past life possibly offer rippling metaphorical echoes of the fate in store for the shambling Alvin. Like the intermittent nature montages perhaps paralleling the men's own cycle of crisis and regeneration, these hints aren't fully worked out, yet they undeniably contribute a sense of have-a-go endeavour, adding further



Between the lines: Paul Rudd, Emile Hirsch

flavour to the wry and warm character material.

Far less precious than his earliest fare but at the same time playing on the comedic looseness typical of his commercial projects, this modest, unabashedly eccentric charmer winningly fuses both sides of Green's seemingly split cinematic personality. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Lisa Muskat
Derrick Tseng
Craig Zobel
James Belfer
David Gordon Green

Written for the screen by

David Gordon Green
Based on the film
Either Way (A annan
veg) by Hafsteinn
Gunnar Sigurdsson

Director of

Photography

Tim Orr

Edited by

Colin Patton

Production Designer

Richard A. Wright

Original Score

Explosions in the Sky
David Wingo

Production

Sound Miser

Christof Gebert

Costume Designer

Jill Newell

©To Get to the

Other Side, LLC

Production Companies

A Muskat Filmed

Properties &

Dogfish Pictures

presentation

In association with

Lankin Partners,

Dreambridge

Films, The Bear

Media & Rough

House Pictures

Executive Producers

Leo Joseph

Todd Labarowski

David Óskar Ólafsson

Árni Filippusson

Tobias Munthe

Theo Youngstein

Jody Hill

Danny McBride

Matthew Reilly

Cast

Paul Rudd

Alvin

Emile Hirsch

Lance

Lance LeGault

Toodie, truck driver

Joyce Payne

lady

Gina Grande

Madison

Lynn Shelton

voice of Madison

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Metrodome

Distribution Ltd

8,413ft +8 frames

Rural Texas, 1987. In the wake of devastating brush fires, two highway repairmen make their way through the scorched landscape, repainting the lines on the road. Thirtysomething Alvin feels superior to his youthful workmate Lance, having secured the job for the latter as a favour to Madison, Lance's sister and Alvin's partner. Sex-obsessed Lance can't wait for the weekend to return to town and party, but Alvin appears to relish being alone in the outdoors. Their solitude is interrupted by the appearance of a hearty truck driver, who plies them with hooch. Left alone when Lance goes into town at the weekend, Alvin encounters a lost woman scrabbling through the ashes of her former home. Lance returns with tales of his unsuccessful weekend; the mood between them changes with the realisation that Lance has read the break-up letter Alvin has received from Madison. After an angry confrontation, Alvin storms off and lands unconscious in a creek, returning to apologise to Lance, who says sorry for reading the letter. The two get drunk together, and Lance confesses that an occasional lover is pregnant with his child. Lance can't face fatherhood but Alvin believes it will be the making of him, and asks to join Lance on a jaunt to a music festival the following weekend. Before driving off, they again bump into the truck driver, the previously glimpsed lost woman now sitting beside him in his cab.

Prisoners

USA 2013

Director: Denis Villeneuve

Certificate 15 152m 59s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

"Be ready. All that stands between you and being dead is you." This is the grim father-son warning that opens Canadian director Denis Villeneuve's first English-language movie, a powerful and deftly twisted child-abduction thriller. Fascinated by the growing tension between American individualism and institutions such as the police, it's a movie that puts its own dark spin on the stock cinema figures of obsessed cop and desperate vigilante parent. Where the *Taken* series or TV's *24* milked the predicament of the law-enforcement figure torn between parental and professional duty, here carpenter Keller Dover (Hugh Jackman) is a principled everyman. His belief in self-reliance combines with primal fear for his abducted daughter and drives him to kidnap and torture, while the film slowly but brazenly turns the screws on his desperation. "She's wondering why I haven't found her every day. Not you. Me," he spits at Detective Loki, his equally intransigent institutional shadow.

Yet this is a film where everything speaks louder than words. From its low-key Thanksgiving abduction opener, in which a parked RV in a Pennsylvania suburb seeps menace, through the tense, twisty frustrations of the investigation and the sleepwalking misery of two sets of parents, it's a film grimly eloquent in everything except its dialogue. Cinematographer Roger Deakins's pitilessly bleak November exteriors offer as little hope as his claustrophobic interiors, his camera peering through smeary windscreens and sneaking through corridors stalker-style. Still, in the excellent sequence where fellow parents Terrence Howard and steely Viola Davis are enlisted to help Dover torture the suspect he has kidnapped, Dover's repeated rationale is only a blunt stub: "We hurt him till he talks. Or they die."

Terse to the point of baldness, Villeneuve's thriller is nevertheless adult for a genre piece in its unsettling exposure of the moral dilemmas thrown up by Dover's actions. Unusually, it

doesn't implicitly endorse his behaviour *Zero Dark Thirty*-style, seemingly more interested in the effect on the torturer than in the question of whether torture can ever be justified. Since Paul Dano's opaque suspect Alex Jones offers up just one impenetrable remark after bloodsoaked beatings and scalding showers, what Dover mostly reaps is moral anguish. Ambiguity permeates everything in the narrative, from screenwriter Aaron Guzikowski's bottomless supply of double-edged clues and narrative feints to Dover's own motivation.

Having lingered over their depiction at grim length, *Prisoners* declines to opine on whether Dover's actions transcend the rule of law. Instead it concentrates on contrasting loner and lawman; its other hero, Jake Gyllenhaal's dogged Loki, is similarly frustrated by his inability to break the case. In setting its leading characters up as parallel and rival 'protectors', the film is helped by a pair of eye-catching performances, particularly that of Gyllenhaal, playing utterly against type as a brooding, isolated, blue-collar workaholic. His stifled frustrations have the edge over Jackman's glowering, rage-filled Dover, a portrayal whose unremitting intensity recalls and redoubles his despairing Valjean in *Les Misérables*. Mostly the film pulls off with aplomb the tough act of giving the leading men narrative parity, conducting a tense game of story 'tag' between them. However, in the last act it plunges into a David Fincher-style welter of dark ritual-killing discoveries and red herrings, which feels like a deliberate distraction from Dover's transgressions. Responding to Dover's moral trespass with a suspenseful if over-symmetrical payback allows the film to offer a redemption that is showier than it is satisfying.

Guzikowski's well-honed thriller (it was much admired for its expert mechanics on the 2009 'Black List' of unproduced scripts) occasionally idles under Villeneuve's dark character studies, but the director's powerfully imposed mood of dread elevates what might otherwise have been just a superior police procedural. It



The searchers: Jake Gyllenhaal, Hugh Jackman

puts it into the same bracket as *Mystic River* (2003) and *Gone Baby Gone* (2007), pieces unafraid to explore human wretchedness through their bleak mysteries, though it lacks the subtlety, and thus the surprise, of *In the Bedroom* (2001). Dread, heralded in the film by the thuddingly obvious 'menace' music of Jóhann Jóhannsson, is the film's main dish, not its seasoning. While not as extreme as *Incendies* (2010), Villeneuve's Oscar-nominated breakout film, which bludgeoned the viewer with tragic coincidences until its final oedipal whammy, the predilection here for piling on the misery to the point of melodrama makes *Prisoners* just a tad over-egged. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Broderick Johnson Kira Davis Andrew A. Kosove Adam Kolbrenner	Entertainment production Executive Producers Edward L. McDonnell John H. Starke Robyn Meisinger Mark Wahlberg Stephen Levinson	Kyla Drew Simmons Joy Birch Wayne Duvall Captain Richard O'Malley Len Cariou Father Patrick Dunn David Dastmalchian Bob Taylor
Written by Aaron Guzikowski Director of Photography Roger Deakins Editors Joel Cox Gary Roach Production Designer Patrice Vermette Music Jóhann Jóhannsson Sound Mixer Mary H. Ellis Costume Designer Renée April	Cast Hugh Jackman Keller Dover Jake Gyllenhaal Detective Loki Viola Davis Nancy Birch Maria Bello Grace Dover Terrence Howard Franklin Birch Melissa Leo Holly Jones Paul Dano Alex Winterman Jones Dylan Minnette Ralph Dover Zoe Soul Eliza Birch Erin Gerasimovich Anna Dover	Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS Colour/Prints by DeLuxe [1.85:1] Distributor El Films 13,768 ft +8 frames
©Alcon Entertainment, LLC Production Companies An Alcon Entertainment presentation An 8:38 Productions production A Madhouse		

Pennsylvania, present day. Six-year-old friends Anna and Joy go missing from a Thanksgiving dinner. Detective Loki arrests suspicious loner Alex Jones but reluctantly releases him for lack of evidence. Anna's enraged father Keller Dover abducts, imprisons and interrogates Jones violently, after noticing several ambiguous clues. Jones reveals nothing during torture. Loki suspects a hooded man seen at a vigil. He starts to suspect Dover. Loki arrests Bob Taylor, the hooded man, after finding boxes of snakes plus bloody clothes belonging to Joy and Anna in his home. Taylor draws mazes, and commits suicide with a policeman's gun after a frustrated Loki attacks him. Taylor's confession was false – the girls' clothing was stolen, daubed with pig's blood. Jones tells Dover the girls are in a maze. Joy escapes, but woozily accuses Dover of being an abductor. Loki finds Jones in Dover's 'prison'. Dover visits Alex's aunt Holly. She drugs him and confesses to having abducted the girls. She abducted children for years with her now vanished husband, to revenge herself on God for her son's death. She shoots Dover in the leg, then imprisons him in an underground cave in her yard, hidden under an abandoned car. Dover finds Anna's red whistle there. Loki connects Holly's husband's maze medallion with Taylor's drawings. He finds Holly giving Anna a fatal injection and kills her, but is wounded in the head. Loki rushes Anna to hospital. They both recover. Dover is assumed to have fled. Days later, after a forensics team halt digging in the frozen Jones yard, Loki hears a whistle being blown faintly from the direction of the car.

Project Wild Thing

United Kingdom 2013
Director: David Bond

Reviewed by Perle Petit

David Bond's documentary is first and foremost an engaging watch. After videotaping his five-year-old daughter for a day, Bond begins to fear that his children's sedentary lifestyle will result in them growing up obese and depressed. He decides to start an advertising campaign to get kids out of the house and into nature, and manages to turn what would appear to be a rather dry subject into a refreshing and thought-provoking film.

Following the activist streak of his 2010 film *Erasing David*, in which he explored the subject of privacy in a world of surveillance and technology, Bond's new fad is nature. He appoints himself 'marketing director for nature' and treats the issue in a novel but cheap way, as a product that needs selling. His fault is to oversimplify that which is complex. He claims that it is the generally negative image of nature supplied to children, added to the fear culture of their parents, that keeps Britain's kids inside. He doesn't consider the idea that urbanisation might be the key to the 'crisis'. By amalgamating the disparate notions of outdoors and nature, he doesn't seem to understand that his idealistic view of spending days roaming the wilderness is a nostalgic fantasy no longer feasible in the modern world. As a result it's easy to be confused by the direction of Bond's struggle against what emerges as just the consequences of our contemporary life. For instance, he wants children away from screens yet gladly advertises through screen-based media, inadvertently devaluing the natural world by placing it alongside such corporate giants as Disney and BMW.

It constitutes an admirable effort but we see the pointlessness of his campaign far sooner than he does. In the end, we enjoy the film more because of the personalities of Bond's family members and the dynamic children he interviews, as well as Bond's own affable everyman demeanour. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Ashley Jones Camera Annemarie Lean Vercoe Amy Rose Gavin Northover Edited by Jesse Dixon Alan Mackay Sound Design Finn Curry	The BRITDOC Foundation & Green Lions present a Green Lions production A film by David Bond and Ashley Jones Executive Producers Sandra Whigham James Du Cann In Colour [1.78:1] Distributor	The BRITDOC Foundation/ Green Lions
©Green Lions Ltd Production Companies		

In this documentary, father and campaigner David Bond is horrified to discover that his children spend only around four per cent of their time outside. He appoints himself 'marketing director of nature' and sets about developing an advertising campaign to encourage the younger generation to explore the outdoors. Though the campaign initially thrives, David soon realises that such an ineffable 'product' is unsellable. He recognises that he has neglected his family and accepts the impossibility of what he had set out to achieve.

Riddick

Canada/USA 2013
Director: David Twohy
Certificate 15 118m 30s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

Writing about John Carpenter back in 1998, Kent Jones declared that his subject "stood completely and utterly alone as the last genre filmmaker in America". Fifteen years later, it might be time to introduce John Carpenter to David Twohy. I'm sure they'd get along fine. After making an inauspicious debut as the co-writer of *Critters 2: The Main Course* (1988), the California-born director has carved out a niche as Hollywood's most enjoyably unpretentious B-movie maestro – a designation that by its very nature prevents the bearer from ever really being covered in glory.

The last time anybody noticed Twohy was when his wildly overstuffed sci-fi *The Chronicles of Riddick* (2004) belly-flopped all over the North American box office: in following up his lean, muscled and vaguely Carpenterian outer-space action flick *Pitch Black* (2000) with a big-budgeted, epically scaled sequel, this typically thrifty filmmaker had suddenly found himself writing gigantic cheques that his pared-down talent couldn't quite cash. Having recovered more than nicely with 2009's superbly entertaining thrill-killer satire *A Perfect Getaway* – one of the brightest under-the-radar blips of recent years and a wonderful showcase for Timothy Olyphant and Milla Jovovich – Twohy now reaches back to the heady days of *Pitch Black* with *Riddick*, which completes the trilogy awkwardly bridged by *Chronicles* and brings it back to first principles.

Which are, quite simply: survival of the fittest. When Vin Diesel's titular mercenary found himself nestled into intergalactic intrigues opposite slumming Shakespearean actors in *The Chronicles of Riddick*, he was like a barracuda out of water. (Although the movie did at least provide a highlight-reel clip for the ages by putting him in the same frame as Dame Judi Dench.) Here he's in his element – a muscled figure in a rugged landscape. His only job is to make nasty, brutish and short work of some rival assassins trying to extract him severed head first from the barren desert planet he's been exiled to after his failed adventure in death-cult monarchy.

Riddick begins with a wonderful extended prologue in which our antihero figures out the best strategy for eking out a solo existence in a landscape crawling with critters (sleekly conjured via a combination of CGI and puppet effects). This section is almost its own mini-movie, complete with the introduction of an



Back to basics: Vin Diesel

The Selfish Giant

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Clio Barnard
Certificate 15 90m 43s

antagonist (a scorpion-like 'mud demon'); the arrival of a loyal sidekick (a feral space-dog); a training montage; and a final showdown between man and monster that's rousing well choreographed. After that, the bounty hunters touch down and *Riddick* settles into a nice *The Most Dangerous Game* groove, with Diesel ringing a sociopathic variation on the Joel McCrea role – he gets off on being hunted.

His creator, meanwhile, gets off on sex (loudly joked about by the nasty co-ed grunts trying to take Riddick down) and violence (lots of gunplay and gratuitous gore). Twohy's unrepentant enthusiasm for such stuff might be a little bit sick but it's also infectious – and coming at the end of a summer movie season whose big-ticket items felt uniformly innocuous, it might even be healthy. It's arguable that *A Perfect Getaway* was playing allegorical games underneath its twisty plot hijinks, but *Riddick* isn't aiming for anything higher than cheap thrills. Luckily, David Twohy is a crackshot. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Vin Diesel
Ted Field

Written by

David Twohy
Based on characters
created by Jim
Wheat, Ken Wheat

Director of

Photography
David Eggby

Edited by

Tracy Adams

Production

Designer

Joseph Nemec II

Music

Graeme Revell

Supervising Sound

Editor & Designer

Scott Martin Gershin

Costume Designer

Simonetta Mariano

Visual Effects

Mokko

Method

Raynault FX

Oblique FX

Entity

Proof

Modus

Cornen

Stunt Co-

ordinators

Troy Robinson

Michael Scherer

Fight Coordinator

Guillermo Grispo

@Riddick Canada

Productions, Inc.

Production

Companies

One Race Films

presents a One Race

Films production in

association with

Universal Pictures

and Radar Pictures

A David Twohy film

Executive

Producers

Samantha Vincent

Mike Drake

Captain Santana

Matt Nable

Boss Johns

Katee Sackhoff

Dahl

Dave Bautista

Diaz

Bokeem Woodbine

Moss

Raoul Trujillo

Lockspur

Karl Urban

Lord Sberius Vaako



Land of scavengers: Conner Chapman, Shaun Thomas

See feature
on page 32

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Clio Barnard's *The Selfish Giant* bears a tenuous relation to the Oscar Wilde children's story that inspired it – so tenuous that the director admits she thought of changing the title entirely. The giant of her story is the exploitative and potentially violent scrap dealer Kitten – who at one point threatens to put teenager Arbor's arm through a wire stripper – and his garden is the scrapyards, a field of recycled, often stolen, metal. Kitten's yard embodies the malaise of a dismantled industrial society in which nothing new is made but everything is available to be picked, stolen, scavenged: a selfish economy in which everything is potentially worth a bob or two (the theme gets a sourly comic spin when the father of Arbor's best friend Swifty sells his sofa from right under his numerous children).

Thankfully, Wilde's mawkish tale of renewal and redemption doesn't haunt the film too obviously, although elements echo faintly. The Christ Child who haunts the Giant's garden, with stigmata on his hands and feet, here becomes the martyred Swifty, whose death prompts Kitten to hand himself over to the police. It's arguably only the residual trace of the Wilde story that entirely makes sense of Kitten's surprisingly sudden and open redemption.

But *The Selfish Giant* isn't best approached as an experiment in recycling a familiar text (narrative scavenging, as it were). The film is a return to the Bradford setting of Barnard's debut feature *The Arbor* (2010), in which actors lip-synched to documentary testimonies about local playwright Andrea Dunbar. Despite its reworking of an incongruous pre-text, however, *The Selfish Giant* shares little of *The Arbor*'s overtly experimental motivation. Instead, this essay in lyrical realism belongs in a very familiar British tradition that connects such films as *Kes* (1969), *Ratcatcher* (1999), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and *Fish Tank* (2009) – depictions of the

immediate conditions of social deprivation from the point of view of children and teenagers.

Having chosen to pitch her stall this time directly on the royal road of British art cinema, Barnard nevertheless brings a distinctive poetic spin to her material, making the film as much a study of the porous boundary between town and country as *Kes* was. There's a strikingly eerie ruralist magic to the repeated shots of horses standing on horizons at night – Barnard and DP Mike Eley make strong, often stylised use of horizontals, including the frame of the bed that Arbor sometimes hides under (his own arbour, perhaps?). There's an extraordinary shot late in the film of a landscape that bears the marks of post-industrial disuse, the land and vegetation taking on the look of fatigued, rusted metal, evocative of the inert mineralisation afflicting a world once organic.

The organic forces in the film (in the terms of Wilde's story, the endurance of irrepressible life to make England's dead garden bloom) are represented by the two boys and by Kitten's horse Diesel. The racing with traps, or two-wheeled 'sulkies', is a phenomenon that will be familiar to viewers of the underrated *Eden Valley* (1995), by the Newcastle-based Amber Collective. In Barnard's film the theme provides an almost autonomous sequence of explosive energy, in which sulkies race down the road followed by a flotilla of trucks carrying cheering spectators.

As for the film's two young leads, their relationship – a little-and-large duo echoing *Of Mice and Men*, although the ostracised Swifty is more astute than his persecutors think – is the core of compassion and solidarity in a harsh world. Sentiment only creeps in at the very last moment, in a shot in which the dead Swifty seemingly reappears to clasp hands with Arbor under his bed, but otherwise the rapport between the two boys has a boisterous, prosaic ease. Like Billy Casper in *Kes*, Arbor embodies the capacity of the young soul to endure society's best attempts to crush it – and seeing him shin



up a lamp post carries echoes of Billy's scrawny athleticism in the *Loach* film. The school here may not be as mechanically soul-destroying as Billy's, but for all the liberalism it espouses there's an antiseptic, bureaucratic deadness about its shiny corridors, while cheerful placards in the classroom urging 'Be Positive' come across as empty sloganeering. And the school does, after all, entirely give up on the boys.

Conner Chapman and Shaun Thomas are terrific fresh finds for Barnard, and the film is a triumph in the direction of young untried actors. Thomas's less demonstrative role shouldn't blind us to the depth of emotive power that he finds in the quietly tenacious, ethically stalwart Swifty, while Chapman is one of those force-of-nature young talents (as David Bradley was in *Kes*, and Katie Jarvis in *Fish Tank*) who seem to find their personal apotheosis in one perfect role, whether or not they have screen futures ahead of them. Arbor's perfect, irrepressible defiance emerges in a superb moment in which this pugnacious shrimp of a lad, possibly destined for a successful entrepreneurial career on one side of the law or another, welcomes police officers to his house with a peremptory bark of "Shoes – off!" **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tracy O'Riordan
Written by
Clio Barnard
Inspired by Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant*
Director of Photography
Mike Eley
Editor
Nick Fenton
Production Designer
Helen Scott
Composer
Harry Escott
Sound Recordist
Tim Barker
Costume Designer
Matthew Price

©Selfish Giant Film Ltd/The British Film Institute/Channel Four Television Corporation
Production Companies

BFI and Film4 present a Moonspun Films production
Developed with the assistance of Film4
Made with the support of the BFI's Film Fund
Executive Producers
Katherine Butler
Lizzie Francke

Cast
Conner Chapman
Arbor Fenton
Shaun Thomas
Swifty
Sean Gilder
Chris Kane, 'Kitten', 'The Selfish Giant'
Lorraine Ashbourne
Mary
Ian Burfield
Mick Brazil
Steve Evets
'Price Drop' Swift
Siobhan Finneran

Mrs Swift
Ralph Ineson
Johnny Jones
Rebecca Manley
Michelle 'Shelly' Fenton
Rhys McCoy
Daniel
Elliott Tittensor
Martin Fenton

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Artificial Eye
Film Company

8,164 ft +8 frames

Bradford, the present. Thirteen-year-old Arbor, on medication for hyperactivity, lives with his mother and older brother. He and his best friend Swifty, who is from a deprived local family, are inseparable. The boys discover the local trade in stolen cables and other metals, and after appropriating some older thieves' haul, sell it to scrap dealer Kitten. Excluded from school after Arbor defends Swifty in a fight, the boys are soon regular visitors to Kitten's yard, and become involved in the trap races in which Kitten's horse Diesel competes. Arbor becomes a crafty entrepreneur in scrap, but he and Swifty fall out after Arbor plans to test a wire on a foal, to see if it's electrified. Arbor attempts to sell metal that he's stolen from Kitten, but loses the money to the men from whom he stole his first haul. Furious, Kitten sends Arbor on a dangerous stealing mission, during which Swifty is electrocuted. When the police arrive, Kitten takes responsibility for the boy's death. Arbor is turned away from Swifty's house but is later reconciled with his dead friend's mother. He is finally seen tending to Diesel.

Short Term 12

Director: Destin Daniel Cretton
Certificate 15 96m 59s



It don't worry them: Kaitlyn Dever, Brie Larson

Reviewed by Ryan Gilbey

A screenplay's initial dialogue can provide a satisfying vehicle for some thematic announcement or mission statement. Think of *The Squid and the Whale* (2005), where the opening line – "Mom and me versus you and Dad" – spoken at the outset of a family tennis match, signals the domestic rupture to come. The first words heard in *Short Term 12* are: "Don't worry about it." The film that follows, adapted by writer-director Destin Daniel Cretton from his 2008 short of the same name, is a riposte to that inanity.

The film is set largely in a US fostering facility for at-risk teenagers. Rules of engagement are established early on when one boy, Sammy, bolts from the home pursued by his carers, laidback liberal twentysomethings all, who

know only too well that they have no legal dominion over their charges once they make it off the grounds. Neither therapists nor guards, the staff are nevertheless called on to suppress violent outbursts from their wards, though the emphasis is still on fraternal chumminess. Chief carer Grace shaves the head of smart but volatile teenager Marcus by way of a birthday treat. She rouses another lad from his bed in the morning with a few pumps of her Nerf water gun, which is the sort of tomfoolery Nurse Ratched would never have countenanced.

Grace shares her life with a colleague, Mason. Together they are as endearing a couple of hipsters as one could hope to meet at any fairtrade cooperative coffee outlet or Joanna Newsom concert. Their movie-couple role models appear to be Michelle Williams and Seth

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Maren Olson
Asher Goldstein
Astrachan Ron Najor
Written by
Destin Daniel Cretton
Director of Photography
Brett Pawlak
Editor
Nat Sanders
Production Designer

Rachel Myers
Original Music
Joel P West
Supervising Sound Editors
Onnalee Blank
Brandon Spencer
Costume Designers
Mirren Gordon-Crozier
Joy Cretton

Production Companies
Cinedigm and Demarest Films present a Traction Media/Animal Kingdom production
Executive Producers
Frederick W. Green
Douglas Stone
David Kaplan

Cast
Brie Larson
Grace
John Gallagher Jr
Mason
Kaitlyn Dever
Jayden
Rami Malek
Nate
Keith Stanfield
Marcus

Kevin Hernandez
Luis
Melora Walters
Dr Hendler
Stephanie Beatriz
Jessica
Lydia Du Veaux
Kendra
Alex Calloway
Sammy
Frantz Turner
Jack

Diana Maria Riva
Nurse Beth

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Verve Pictures

8,728 ft +8 frames

Present-day US. At a foster-care facility for at-risk teenagers, Grace and Mason are co-workers in their twenties who are also a couple. The adolescents in their charge include Marcus, who is about to turn 18 and leave the home, and Jayden, who self-harms. When Grace tells Mason she is pregnant, he is supportive, though she is already contemplating an abortion. Jayden's father doesn't arrive for a visit on her birthday; she becomes enraged and is calmed by Grace, who opens up to her in a way she cannot with Mason. Jayden reads a story she has written; Grace correctly interprets

it as a metaphor for child abuse and makes a report to her boss. Despite this, Jayden's father is allowed to take her home for a weekend. Grace berates her boss and breaks into Jayden's father's house; she is about to attack him with a baseball bat while he is sleeping but Jayden stops her. Instead, they smash up his car after Grace admits that she was abused by her own father. Grace tells Mason she can't marry him or have their baby but later recants. Marcus tries to kill himself on the eve of his release. Grace begins psychotherapy to work through issues related to her father.

The Taste of Money

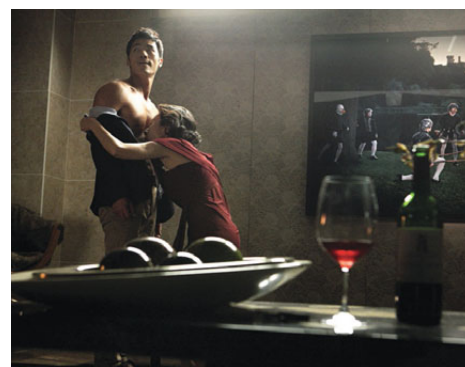
Republic of Korea 2012
Director: Im Sangsoo
Certificate 15 114m 56s

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Few people take Im Sangsoo's work seriously – other than Cannes programmers, obviously – and it's pretty easy to dismiss *The Taste of Money* as a film that falls a long way short of the agenda it sets itself. The film purports to expose the degeneracy and corruption within the kind of 'top' family that runs Korea's *chaebol*, the manufacturing and service-industry conglomerates which dominate the Korean economy. This means that the film is mostly set in a swanky mansion crammed with modern art and hidden surveillance cameras and populated by a range of dull stereotypes: a wheelchair-bound patriarch close to dementia, his ruthless, sex-starved daughter, her weary, dissolute husband (who plans to run off with the Filipina maid), and their two adult children, a go-getting son and a blasé, brainless daughter. *Written on the Wind* it's not. Our way into this cliché-ridden ménage is through the eyes of a 'beautiful' young man, an employee of ten years' standing, who seems unaccountably naive as he learns just how unscrupulous the family can be.

Average Koreans have long gossiped about the families who own the *chaebol*: their internal schisms, their links with politicians. Sadly Im's exposé is less than forensic. He clearly has no real interest in the nuts and bolts of financial chicanery (one pay-off is shown and a big-money scam in Uzbekistan is much mentioned, but the backstories aren't there) and when it comes to showing how the super-rich live his imagination goes no further than a room piled high with mint-fresh banknotes, a table laden with empty wine bottles and a hand up the maid's skirt during dinner. Im often brags about his daring approach to sex, but here again his 'vision' fails him: he does get veteran actors Baek Yoonsik and Youn Yuhjung to perform sex scenes for the first time in their careers, but the staging is frankly incredible and having a middle-aged woman pounce vampirically on a young hunk doesn't seem like the peak of depravity, even if he is her daughter's boyfriend.

Im is in many ways his own worst enemy, on



Chaebol blues: Kim Kangwoo, Youn Yuhjung

the one hand clinging to a fading 'bad boy' image (now in his fifties, he began directing in 1998 with a string of imitations/revisions of genuinely radical films by Jang Sunwoo) and on the other bigging himself up by invoking Shakespeare, Balzac and Hitchcock as inspirations. (From the press kit: "I apologise for bringing up big names but in all honesty these were the most vital reference material during the pre-production stage.") It's a measure of the film's toothlessness that it was distributed in Korea by Lotte, one of the very *chaebol* it notionally attacks, and it's ironic that the film appears at the very moment when Korea's president Park Geunhye (daughter of the military dictator Park Chunghee, who was assassinated in 1979) has ordered the police and tax authorities to target the *chaebol*.

In concept if not in narrative, *The Taste of Money* is a sequel to Im's 2010 film *The Housemaid*, a misbegotten remake of Kim Kiyoung's 1960 classic. This is marginally more watchable than that cinematic atrocity: Kim Woohyung's cinematography is excellent, some of the black comedy is quite amusing, and the fetishisation of what the press kit calls Kim Kangwoo's "enviable physique" provides some ambiguous frissons. But why on earth is the American baddie (played by Korean film promoter Darcy Paquet) called Robert Altman? ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Lee Namhee

Producer

Seo Junghun

Written by

Im Sangsoo

Director of Photography

Kim Woohyung

Editing

Lee Eunsoo

Production Design

Kim Younghee

Music

Kim Hongjip

Production Sound Mixers

Eun Heesoo

Lim Hyoungju

Supervising

Costume Designers

Kwon Yoojin

Rim Seunghee

@Filmpasmal

Production Companies

Daisy & Cinergy

Entertainment

presents in

association with

Lotte Entertainment

Co-presents: ISU

Venture Capital

Co. Ltd, kth

Production:

Filmpasmal

Executive Producers

Son Kwangik

Kim Wonkuk

Film Extracts

Hanyo/The

Housemaid (1960)

Hanyo/The

Housemaid (2010)

Cast

Kim Kangwoo

Youngjak, private

secretary

Baek Yoonsik

Chairman Yoon,

the father

Youn Yuhjung

Keumok 'Baek',

the mother

Kim Hyeon

Nami, the daughter

Maui Taylor

Eva, the maid

On Juwan

Chul, the son

Kwon Byounggil

Noh, Keumok's father

Hwang Jungmin

Noh's assistant

Darcy Paquet

Robert Altman

Kim Eungsoo

boss 1

Park Jinyoung

boss 2

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Arrow Film

Distributors Ltd

8,728 ft +0 frames

Korean theatrical title

Do-nul mat

Joo Youngjak, an employee of the super-rich Baek family, is ordered by his boss Yoon Kyungsun to deliver wads of cash to a corrupt official. Yoon's son Chul, CEO of the family conglomerate, is about to sign a shady but lucrative deal with American businessman Robert Altman – with the approval of Yoon's wife Baek Keunok and her geriatric father, the source of the family's wealth. But Yoon has an increasingly open affair with the family's Filipina maid Eva, and announces that he wants to move to Manila with her.

Chul's divorced sister Nami is attracted to Youngjak and they begin a secret romance. Baek is so enraged by her husband's infidelity that she forces herself on Youngjak. Baek and Chul thwart Yoon's plan to emigrate and have Eva drowned. Emotionally bereft, Yoon slashes his wrists. Humiliated by Chul and his thugs, Youngjak loads some stolen Baek family cash into Eva's coffin and accompanies it on the flight to Manila. Nami secretly follows him on to the plane; they deliver the coffin to Eva's bereaved children together.

Rogen in *Take This Waltz* (2011). When faced with an evening together, they sit at opposite ends of the sofa and sketch one another. How adorable is that? Mason bakes. Grace makes badges using arts-and-crafts stencils and fabrics. Chances are they have never even heard of Netflix or the Kardashians. It is much to the credit of the performers – Brie Larson as Grace, John Gallagher Jr as Mason – that we rarely want to strangle them with a set of love beads.

The film does a neat job of balancing their fondness for each other with warning signs of the problems that may yet tear them apart. Mason's habit of asking, "Is this OK?" and "Do you want me to stop?" during moments of intimacy hints at an uneasiness in Grace that is confirmed when she slaps him without provocation. We may have guessed the root of her problems well before she starts comparing historical scars with Jayden, an adolescent girl who has been cutting herself to relieve the agony of parental abuse.

Over-sharing is the least of Grace's problems at home, but she can't help herself when confronted with the parallels between her life and Jayden's. Ostensibly consoling the girl by confessing to her own troubled past, Grace effects a fascinating exchange in the power dynamic between them, culminating in a highly charged moment when the carer has to be stopped by the patient from committing an act of violence, possibly even murder. The various cutaways to close-ups of toys around the facility – a Sylvanian Family koala here, an inflatable yellow dog there – remind us that at no point do we ever really put away childish things. Grace's scars may be paler than those on Jayden's body but her youthful traumas are no less vivid for having occurred a decade ago.

Short Term 12 has a neatness to it that can be formally satisfying (as in the mirror-image scenes of Sammy fleeing the home, which bookend the movie, or a recurrent aquatic motif) but emotionally banal. Just as each client in the facility has a defining characteristic (the joker, the basket-case, the brooder), so the various plotlines often follow rather regimented story arcs. And while *Short Term 12* is more insightful than many other pictures occupying similar thematic territory – *Girl, Interrupted* (1999), *Manic* (2001), *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (2010) – it still smacks occasionally of the same issue-driven sensibility and knowingly bittersweet tone, the same craving for closure at any cost.

The sentimental emphasis on the creativity of these undervalued youngsters betrays a slight anxiety on the part of the filmmakers: would an audience be interested in these kids if they had no discernible artistic prowess? Besides using her own story-writing and grasp of metaphor to reveal the abuse she has suffered, Jayden turns out to be quite the artistic genius. Marcus is a lyricist and rapper whose work would not have disgraced the Last Poets; one refrain in particular ("To live a life not knowing what a normal life's like") distils eloquently the institutionalised mindset. But as with the relationship between Grace and Mason, it is the adroitness of the performers (Kaitlyn Dever and, from Cretton's original short, Keith Stanfield) that transforms the cliché of the page into the vitality present on screen. ☺

Turbo

USA 2013
Director: David Soren
Certificate U 95m 32s



Shell motorsport: *Turbo*

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

At the centre of *Turbo* are two similar – and similarly fraught – fraternal relationships. One is between Theo/Turbo (voiced by Ryan Reynolds), a snail who dreams of drag-racing glory, and Chet (Paul Giamatti), his responsible, worrywart brother. The other is between Tito (Michael Peña) and Angelo (Luis Guzmán), owners of the Dos Bros taqueria, Tito the failed hype artist and Angelo the steady and industrious worker.

Though it vindicates those who take chances, *Turbo* itself epitomises cautious committee moviemaking. It's a hodge-podge of things that have worked in the past and seem likely, with a little futzing around, to work again. It's an underdog sports movie starring a little guy with a big dream, featuring plenty of wild, careening action to keep the little ones engaged. Perhaps worst of all, it basically *does* work as entertainment, as if in some insidious confirmation of the wisdom of bet-hedging.

The lone risk taken, and certainly the most interesting aspect of *Turbo*, is the decision to set much of the film in the seedier precincts of Los Angeles – not the bits that tourists visit but the strip malls of Van Nuys. The cast of characters and assembled vocal talent reflect the multicultural diversity that one would expect to encounter in this environment, and the jostling chorus of American voices is just enough to elevate *Turbo* into the realms of the forgettably likeable. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Lisa Stewart
Screenplay
David Soren
Darren Lemke
Robert Siegel
Story
David Soren
Visual Consultant
Wally Pfister
Editor
James Ryan
Production Designer
Michael Isaak
Music
Henry Jackman
Sound Designer
Richard King
Animation Supervisors
Denis Couchon
John Hill
Marek Kochout
Ben Rush
Dan Wagner

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Animation LLC
Production Company
DreamWorks
Animation SKG

Voice Cast

Ryan Reynolds
Theo, 'Turbo'
Paul Giamatti
Chet
Michael Peña
Tito
Luis Guzmán
Angelo
Bill Hader
Guy Gagné
Snoop Dogg
Smooove Move
Maya Rudolph
Burn
Ben Schwartz
Skidmark
Richard Jenkins
Bobby

Ken Jeong
Kim Ly
Michelle Rodriguez
Paz
Samuel L. Jackson
Whiplash
Michael Patrick Bell
White Shadow

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
20th Century Fox
International (UK)

8,598 ft +0 frames

Greater Los Angeles, present day. Theo, who goes by the name Turbo, is a garden snail who obsessively watches IndyCar racing and dreams of becoming the fastest snail in the world. When Turbo is sucked into the supercharger of a drag-racer, he acquires super-car powers. This brings him to the attention of Tito, a taco truck driver who races snails in his spare time. Tito has the idea of entering Turbo in the Indianapolis 500 to drum up business for the restaurant he runs with his brothers. Against all odds, Turbo enters the race and wins.

We Are What We Are

USA/United Kingdom 2013
Director: Jim Mickle

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Not so much a remake of the 2010 Mexican film *Somos lo que hay*, this is, according to its director Jim Mickle, more of a "companion piece", inspired by the central idea of a family bound together by their secret taste for human flesh. Whereas Jorge Michel Grau's original was a fable of urban survival – his city-dwelling cannibals were motivated by hunger – Mickle's is steeped in earthy backwoods-gothic atmosphere, and addresses profoundly American themes such as freedom, religion and dissent.

Bill Sage plays Frank Parker, a twitchy patriarch with an Old Testament beard who insists – violently if necessary – that his three children follow the family tradition they call 'Lamb's Day'. This involves fasting for three days, killing a human sacrifice and then feasting on the ritually butchered remains, so it's not surprising that the younger generation, especially Iris (Ambyr Childers) and Rose (Julia Garner), are starting to have mutinous thoughts. The backstory to the Parker secret is gradually revealed to be one of historic hardship, but now obedience and custom have taken over as the prime objective; nothing, not even Mrs Parker dropping dead in a parking lot in the film's opening scene, will sway Frank from his purpose.

In a way the Parkers are just particularly extremist dissenters in a long line of fiery American non-conformism. Rather than live according to a faith that no longer makes sense of the world, they have invented their own bespoke religion, complete with a holy book telling the ritual's origin story; this provides the unsettling flashbacks to the 1700s that are threaded through the film. The Parkers' nemesis is a man of science – Dr Barrow, a GP whose own daughter is one of the local 'disappeared' and whose autopsy of Mrs Parker sets him researching brain diseases caused by funny eating habits. Barrow's rationality is set against Frank's firm belief in his own freedom to follow his insane but carefully codified orthodoxy. But Frank's libertarianism



Meat cute: Julia Garner

Le Week-end

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Roger Michell
Certificate 15 92m 59s

does not extend, of course, to Rose's attempt to dissent from him, and this irony provides much of the meat – if you'll pardon the expression – of a film that's as much about autonomy and choice as it is about blood and gore.

With its almost too painfully slow build-up, this is not a horror film that delivers punctual shocks every few minutes. Instead, Mickle and co-writer Nick Damici (who also worked together on 2006's *Mulberry Street* and 2010's *Stake Land*) give themselves plenty of time to tease out their themes and ladle on the tension. Helped by a hackle-raising performance by Garner as the rebellious Rose, and by the truly blood-chilling Sage, they withhold the inevitable bloodfest until the audience is nearly as hungry as the Parkers. When it comes, though, the horror will have you squirming in your seat – and it will be a long time before you fancy meat stew again. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Rodrigo Bellott
Andrew D. Corkin
Linda Moran
Nicholas Shumaker
Jack Turner

Written by

Nick Damici
Jim Mickle
Based on the screenplay *Somos lo que hay* by Jorge Michel Grau

Director of Photography

Ryan Samul

Editor

Jim Mickle

Production Designer

Russell Barnes

Music

Philip Mossman
Darren Morris
Jeff Grace

Sound Mixer

Mikhail Sterkin

Costume Designer

Elisabeth Vastola

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Production Companies

Memento Films
International present
in association
with Belladonna
Productions.

Uncorked
Productions
and The Zoo
In association with
Entertainment
One UK Ltd

Executive Producers

Emilie Georges
Tanja Meissner
Brett Fitzgerald
Mo Noorali
Rene Bastian
Jacob Pechenik

Cast

Bill Sage
Frank Parker
Ambyr Childers
Iris Parker
Julia Garner
Rose Parker
Wyatt Russell
Deputy Anders

Nick Damici

Sheriff Meeks

Kelly McGillis

Marge

Michael Parks

Doc Barrow

Kassie DePaiva

Emma Parker

Laurent Rejto

hardware clerk

Jack Gore

Rory Parker

Annemarie Lawless

Arlene Stratton

Traci Hovel

Mrs Kimble

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

El Films



We'll always have Paris: Jim Broadbent, Lindsay Duncan

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Seven years ago, director Roger Michell and screenwriter Hanif Kureishi scored a hit with the Oscar-nominated *Venus* – a meditation on old age that was a showcase for Peter O'Toole. They return to the subject of age and its frustrations with *Le Week-end*, this time providing plum roles for Jim Broadbent and Lindsay Duncan as a couple in late middle age who travel to Paris to try to relive their honeymoon. With their stale relationship brought into uncomfortable focus by the happy memories of the past, the weekend looks set to be more rom-tradge than romcom. But the film belies its glum premise and unpromising title: perfectly cast and utterly charming, it turns out to be full of hilarious exchanges and unexpected treats.

Broadbent plays Nick, the disappointed inheritor of a once promising future. His wife Meg (Duncan) has turned bitter with advancing age, refusing his attempts at intimacy and hectoring him for his lack of spontaneity. The basics of the relationship are beautifully sketched out in miniature in the very first scene, as they travel to Paris on the Eurostar: Nick fretful and fidgety, Meg irritable and insular. It seems, at first, like a simple case of pathetic wimp versus super-bitch, but as the film unfolds and the characters reveal themselves, simplicity is no longer a viable response. Underneath their fussing and complaining, the couple are sharply funny; we are pulled in different directions, siding with each of them in turn, only to find our sympathies reversed again in the next scene. At times it's hard to like either

of them; then it's hard not to love them both. As Meg and Nick seesaw between affection and exasperation for each other, the complexity of a 30-year marriage is elaborated in all its subtlety.

It's Meg's idea to throw caution to the wind and splash out on a fancy hotel and all the trimmings. They both know they can't afford it, although Nick hasn't yet told his wife about his problems at work. Their reckless spending spree both crystallises their personality differences and injects the narrative with a shot of jeopardy – how long before reality catches up with them? But it's when they bump into Nick's old friend Morgan (played by Jeff Goldblum) that the choices they've made in their lives really come home to them. Morgan was a Cambridge contemporary of Nick's and on paper he's had the life Nick might have aspired to: living in Paris with his second wife, a successful writing career and a baby on the way. He is – even more gallingly – a really nice guy. But of course the first impression – prosperous American full of overbearing bonhomie – does not survive closer inspection. At the dinner party he hosts to celebrate the publication of his latest book, his neediness bleeds silently from every pore.

Such richness of characterisation comes first from the writing. Kureishi's dialogue pops and zings, and he's fearless when it comes to letting awkward moments hang. But the performances give the film its wings. Broadbent's effortless authenticity bestows Nick with an almost unbearable pathos, but he's able to unearth reservoirs of fierce conviction too, and his uxoriousness, which seems at first to

The Catskills, US, present day. Emma Parker, mother of three, collapses and dies in the village near her family's isolated trailer park. Her death coincides with a violent storm, and her grieving family – husband Frank, teenage daughters Iris and Rose and small son Rory – have to cope with the news while battling against the weather and a power cut. They are also at the beginning of an annual family ritual that means fasting for three days before eating a human sacrifice they have murdered. Frank insists that the ritual continue as normal, with Iris performing the killing instead of her mother.

Meanwhile, local doctor Barrow finds a human bone near the trailer park and suspects that foul play may be behind the spate of missing-person cases, including the disappearance of his own daughter. He recruits the sheriff's deputy Anders to help him search for evidence. Iris lures Anders away from the Parker house and offers him sex, but Frank discovers them and kills Anders. Iris and Rose reluctantly go through with the ritual killing and meal, but they are now terrified both of Frank and of their secret being discovered. His attempt to poison his children is interrupted by Barrow, who now has proof of their cannibalism. There is a gunfight, and as his life ends, Barrow sees Iris and Rose turn on their wounded father and begin to eat him. The three children drive away to a new life.

be his fatal flaw, turns out to be the key to his survival. Duncan, likewise, is a joy: like many female actors past the toothsome love-interest stage, she's been starved recently of quality film roles but doesn't waste a chance here to embody the brutal crisis of identity that comes with faded beauty. In other company, Goldblum might have stolen the film with his electrifying third-act entrance; but he can roar, tic and goggle here to his heart's content without upsetting the appercart. It's hard to think of another actor who could combine such a full-throttle performance so perfectly with a subtext of neurosis.

Michell steers these star turns with grace and tact, stepping back to let key exchanges play out without interference, then moving the pace up a gear to maintain the momentum. *Le Week-end* is a small film in some ways – its ambitions are all in the fineness of the grain rather than the scope of the horizon – but it's a warm and satisfying one. And it proves again that films made for grown-ups can be more nimble-footed and fresh-faced than anything aimed at the youth market. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Kevin Loader	Production Companies A Free Range film Co-financed by Curzon Film Rights 2 Limited Made with the support of Film4 and BFI's Film Fund	Michael Judith Davis Eve
Screenplay Hanif Kureishi	Dolby Digital In Colour	Distributor Curzon Film World
Director of Photography Nathalie Durand	Executive Producers Sue Bruce Smith Philip Knatchbull Louisa Dent	8,368 ft +8 frames
Editor Kristina Hetherington	Film Extracts <i>Bande à part</i> (1964)	
Production Designer Emmanuelle Duplay	Cast Jim Broadbent Nick Lindsay Duncan Meg Jeff Goldblum Morgan Olly Alexander	
Original Music Jeremy Sams		
Sound Recordist Martin Beresford		
Costume Designer Natalie Ward		

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UK, present day. Nick and Meg, a couple heading towards old age, travel to Paris hoping to relive their honeymoon. Meg insists on staying at a luxury hotel they can't afford, and is determined to enjoy the best of Paris; Nick frets about the money they are spending. It emerges that Nick has just been sacked in disgrace from his university job after insulting a black student; this, along with the couple's moribund sex life and the burden of their still-dependent adult son, has plunged Nick into depression. Meg meanwhile is struggling with her own disappointments and – as a former beauty – with her fading attractiveness. The couple bump into Nick's American friend Morgan and are intimidated by his self-confidence, his affluence and his success as an author. Morgan tells them that he is living in Paris with his new young wife, who is expecting their first child, and invites them to a party at his apartment. At the party Nick and Meg feel dull and inadequate, but their sense of alienation and discomfort brings them closer and they return triumphant to the hotel. The next morning, however, they are evicted, their credit card having been refused. Morgan seems to be their only hope, so they meet him in a nearby café. Here, the three friends are surprised to find themselves unexpectedly liberated and energised by their ludicrous predicament. Jim puts a record on a jukebox and they begin to dance.

Which Way Is the Front Line from Here? The Life and Time of Tim Hetherington

USA/United Kingdom 2013, Director: Sebastian Junger, Certificate 15 77m 42s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

There's a moment in this documentary portrait of the late Tim Hetherington when he voices what many people think about those singular individuals who risk everything to bring back images from the world's war-torn hot-spots. Travelling along a country road in Liberia with a ragtag assemblage of rebel fighters, there's intense gunfire up ahead – so, naturally, he joins the combatants in making straight for the machine-gun rounds. Hetherington himself describes this as "insane... the ultimate loss of control", yet as this film by his former colleague Sebastian Junger shows, it was in such places that Hetherington discerned unexpected truths about the extremities of human behaviour, and captured them in still and moving images.

Junger was co-director with Hetherington on *Restrepo*, the 2010 Oscar-nominated doc which observed the camaraderie of a US army platoon under Taliban attack in mountainous Afghanistan, and here he's put together an essentially admiring tribute to the friend he lost to a Libyan army mortar in the Arab Spring of 2011. Given that provenance, and the restriction of working only with existing footage of Hetherington, the result isn't completely incisive – Hetherington isn't as self-analytical as the subject of David and Jacqui Morris's recent *McCullin* – but it does work reasonably well as an informed and informative primer on the man's remarkable body of work.

Indeed, while there's no shortage of hair-raising video, shot by Hetherington as bullets fly overhead in Liberia, Afghanistan and Libya, it's the more reflective photographic images that impress with their richness and originality. The shots of sleeping soldiers taken during the *Restrepo* project, for instance, show these battle-tough, tattooed warriors as incredibly vulnerable, presenting an implicit commentary on how and why young men are sent overseas to risk their very lives. Looking beyond the bloodshed for a telling image to engage the viewer's imagination is, we learn, an approach Hetherington initially adopted in response to the horrific civil conflict in Liberia, where in pictures of the quiet aftermath of the fighting, the absurd detritus of war, or the self-conscious theatricality of heavily armed youth posing for the camera, he found a richer palette of human expression than the graphic news coverage of daily atrocities.

That Hetherington was to spend a further eight years across West Africa helping to rebuild communities says much about the humanitarian commitment behind his working life, yet we see little of that here, since Junger cuts sharply to the period of their collaboration on *Restrepo*. It's a jarring moment in what is an otherwise smoothly put-together construction of interview and archive, though one that conspicuously fails to probe psychologically into the wherefores of Hetherington's facility for integrating himself within emotionally bonded groups and communities across deadly global conflicts while putting in abeyance the possibility of a stable home life (notwithstanding the evident affection shown by his parents and girlfriend).

Still, if it lacks the last ounce of insight, Junger's film effectively conveys the haunting



Which Way Is the Front Line from Here?

power and eloquence of Hetherington's best pictures, leaving us eager to spend quality time with his photography books. Appropriately, the film's UK release coincides with an exhibition of his Afghan photographs at the Open Eye Gallery in his hometown of Liverpool. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Nick Quested James Brabazon	Sound Editor Mike Suarez	In Colour
Field Camera James Brabazon Tim Hetherington Sebastian Junger	©Tripoli Street, LLC	Distributor Kaleidoscope Entertainment
Edited by Geeta Gandbhir Maya Mumma	Production Companies An HBO Documentary Films presents a Tripoli Street, Goldcrest Films production	6,993 ft +0 frames
Music Joel Goodman	Executive Producer Sheila Nevins	
Supervising		

A biographical documentary about British war photographer, filmmaker and humanitarian Tim Hetherington, who was killed in Misrata, Libya, in April 2011 while covering the uprising against the Gaddafi regime. Archive interviews with Hetherington and newly shot testimony from colleagues and family tell the story of an inveterate traveller who found in photojournalism a way of communicating ideas about far-flung people and places. Having first gained attention with a portfolio about a football team drawn from survivors of the Liberian Civil War, Hetherington gained combat experience with correspondent James Brabazon, travelling with the rebel army seeking to oust the country's feared leader Charles Taylor. In 2010 Hetherington collaborated with Sebastian Junger (director of this documentary) on the Oscar-nominated *Restrepo*, which captured the intimate bonds forged between American soldiers on the front line in Afghanistan. Looking beyond the combat zone, Hetherington began building his relationship with his girlfriend, the Somali-American filmmaker Idil Ibrahim – only to lose his life at the age of 40 to a Libyan army mortar bomb.

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Home cinema



Red rocketeer: Zdenek Štěpánek in *Ikarie XB 1*, Jindrich Polák's 1963 space adventure

SPACE, THE COMMUNIST FRONTIER

Soviet dominance in the early space race led to a brave cinematic vision of interplanetary exploration

IKARIE XB 1

Jindrich Polák; Czechoslovakia 1963; Second Run/Region O DVD; 83 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: filmed interview with Kim Newman, booklet with essay by Michael Brooke

Reviewed by Kim Newman

When the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik in 1958, it seemed possible that the space race would be won by the communist powers... In *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King writes about hearing the news of Sputnik after a matinee screening of *Earth vs the Flying Saucers* and succumbing to a kind of national panic that added to the already paranoid mood of the times. Roger Corman cheerfully exploited this worry by getting *War of the Satellites* (1958) into theatres

within weeks, showing far more efficiency than NASA managed in equalling Russian space achievements. The thrum of fear that beats underneath the technophilia of Hollywood space-travel movies such as *Destination Moon* (1950) is that an 'unfriendly power' might take the high frontier first. After Sputnik came the voyage of cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. Unlike the fictional pioneers of *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and *First Man into Space* (1958) – not to mention their comic-book contemporaries the Fantastic Four – Gagarin did not return to Earth transformed into a monster... except perhaps in the minds of American generals who blustered about not wanting young folks to grow up wishing on a communist moon.

Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, the seeming Soviet dominance of space exploration encouraged (briefly) less fearful visions of the future. Russian, East German and Czech studios – all state-sponsored – produced science-fiction films in which brave, cooperative, often international and multiracial crews of sleek

vessels ventured out from the Earth to other planets and star systems. Actually less hung up on ideology than comparable western efforts – note how the *Star Trek* franchise has always mirrored US foreign policy – these films nevertheless embody post-Stalinist red utopianism. Jindrich Polák's *Ikarie XB 1* (1963) is the Czech entry in this cycle, made just as the Mercury programme was finally competing with Russian rocketry and it seemed likely that America could make good JFK's promise to put a man on the moon (and, significantly, bring him back) by the end of the decade.

Made with all the resources of the Barrandov Studios, which means that the special effects are at least on a par with contemporary Hollywood films, it is an adaptation of *The Magellanic Cloud*, a novel by the Polish science-fiction author Stanislaw Lem, who had already provided the source material for the Polish-East German space movie *Der Schweigende Stern* (aka *First Spaceship on Venus*, 1960), but who later downplayed his 'comrades in space'

books in favour of the more thoughtful, twice-filmed *Solaris* and other troubling fictions.

A prizewinner at the first Trieste Science Fiction Festival in 1963, *Ikarie XB 1* was – like most Eastern Bloc space movies of the time – bought for American distribution by folks who recognised the quality of the effects work but opted to tinker radically with everything else in order to disguise its origins and suit it to kiddie matinees. Communist science fiction was usually equipped with enough robots (a Czech word, remember) for western viewers: *Ikarie* has a humorous subplot about an older scientist (the character is named Anthony Hopkins and played by František Smolík) who is fond of his outdated mechanical man 'Patrick', which is made fun of by younger, less sentimental space trippers but comes up trumps in a crisis. However, the genre was sadly short on monsters and/or savage alien beauties. Roger Corman hired the likes of Francis Coppola and Peter Bogdanovich to add exploitation values to Russian films which he then released as *Battle Beyond the Sun* or *Voyage to the Planet of Prehistoric Women*, but AIP got hold of *Ikarie XB 1* and transformed it into *Voyage to the End of the Universe*.

Lem's original premise is that a huge spaceship from Earth is en route to a 'white planet' in a far-off system, but the added gimmick – which AIP reused when they turned Mario Bava's 1965 film *Terrore nello spazio* into *Planet of the Vampires* – makes all the characters aliens: 'the green planet' the ship arrives at is contemporary Earth, as signified by the Statue of Liberty. It may be that this influenced the makers of *Planet of the Apes* (1968) when they added a twist to Pierre Boulle's novel, but it was also probably copped from two episodes of *The Twilight Zone* ('Third from the Sun' and 'I Shot an Arrow in the Air', which were originally broadcast a week apart in 1960).

Now that Polák's original film is available, and supersedes *Voyage to the End of the Universe* even internationally, it looks ever fresher and more influential a work. Even without the twist ending there is plenty of incident in the film, though it gives as much time to the psychological perils of long space voyages as to the dangers inherent in rocketing to the unknown. A problem with communist science fiction is that if everyone cooperates and does their job cheerfully and efficiently – as, of course, they would in a perfect utopian world – the film can get a trifle dull; when these same rules were applied in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, a similar smooth tedium set in, in comparison with the lively squabbling of the original Enterprise crew. *Ikarie XB 1* solves this by allowing that the vastness of space would have an effect on even the strongest, most committed comrades, and opens with a suspenseful sequence involving a cosmonaut who has gone mad and become a danger to his crewmates, stalking the cavernous, shadowed interior of the ship. Compared with the ham-handed treatment of a similar theme in the American *Conquest of Space* (1955), where an officer succumbs to religious mania and tries to scupper a Mars mission, the Czech vision is far subtler and more affecting.

The crew of the starship *Ikarie* (named for Icarus, of course) offer few of the alpha



Comrades in space: the *Ikarie* crew

personalities found in imaginary western space missions, but they are a rounded, credible collection of mostly amiable, mostly competent folk. It's idealised, naturally: no political appointments to the mission, no borrowed Nazi rocketry, no military application at all to the voyage. However, it's gently plausible about the long trip: instead of square-jawed heroes and space babes, we get an array of various personalities suited or unsuited to the long trip. There are outbursts of irritation or dalliance between voyagers cooped up for too long together (two men complain that a woman is leading them on equally, only to be told that she's married back on Earth). In one of several sequences specifically prefiguring 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968), a pilot video-calls his pregnant wife back on Earth – she'll have a 15-year-old daughter and be older than her husband when he gets back in two years, and the sting is that she was cut from the crew because of her pregnancy but another woman on the mission has kept quiet the fact that she will bear the first child in space.

This is the product of a confident society, looking forward to a happy future that was almost within reach



Man machine: František Smolík as Dr Anthony Hopkins

Older crew members, meanwhile, use closed-circuit TV to keep up with the love lives of the youngsters as if they were an onboard soap opera.

The most political sequence in the film involves what seems to be a long-derelict space casino, a relic from 1987 full of floating corpses because its commanders (implied to be westerners by English-language signs), realising they were running out of oxygen, poisoned the rest of the crew with the wonderfully named 'Tigger Fun' killer gas and then shot each other. In a macabre touch, the flesh flakes off the skull of one of these long-dead, preserved-in-a-vacuum space gamblers – a moment AIP didn't cut out, which gives the film its sole flash of horror. More unusual is the film's insistence that a starship needs to have a social as well as professional life. A futuristic dance party combines electro-acoustic burbling music (the de rigueur sci-fi sound before Kubrick dug out his Strauss records) with stylised medieval movements and the sort of groovy space costumes that would proliferate later in the 60s in the likes of *Barbarella* or *Moon Zero Two*. The fun comes to an abrupt end when an emergency sends the crew rushing to their stations in formal wear.

Second Run's DVD includes an on-camera appreciation by me (interest declared) and a substantial booklet with writing on the film by Michael Brooke – which includes the telling detail that *Ikarie XB 1* was in its home territory only the 18th most popular Czechoslovakian film of 1963 according to box-office takings (the number-one local film that year was the allegorical fantasy comedy *The Cassandra Cat*). The main draw, of course, is the sumptuous transfer of the film, which has gorgeous black-and-white art direction and a stark, almost noirish look. This is the product of a confident society looking forward to a happy future that was almost within reach. Within a few years, Czech science-fiction cinema would be characterised by despairing visions like Jan Schmidt's remarkable 1966 *The End of August at the Hotel Ozone* (*Konec srpna v hotelu Ozon*), in which a group of feral women barely survive in the ruins of a world devastated by nuclear warfare. ☹

New releases

BETTY BOOP: THE ESSENTIAL COLLECTION VOL 1

Max and Dave Fleischer; USA 1932-37; Olive Films/
Region 1 NTSC DVD; 84 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The notorious distillation of pre-Code naughtiness in eye-popping cartoon form, Betty Boop wasn't a character (she never wants or struggles or even says very much) but a totem-sign of cost-free sexuality and the much missed hedonist groove of the Roaring 20s. With her often barely covered breasts, tiny black teddy, ever-present left-thigh garter and non-stop hoochie-koo sass, Boop is an unmistakable libido object refined down to a few spare lines and shapes, and remains a campy byword for retro-sexual culture. The fact is, though, as evidenced in this 12-short collection, Boop's alluring yet somehow prepubescent persona isn't what's most outrageous about the Fleischer shorts built around her. Often, other characters in this particular cartoon bestiary will try to abscond with her or to glimpse her taking a shower, but that's nothing compared to the lysergic flora and fauna otherwise exploding out of the films' every frame, an unprecedented and still-unrivalled torrent of deranged dream imagery that doesn't seem to have a *raison d'être*, and is never ever funny.

It's all much too weird to make sense as humour: whether Boop is a snake-oil saleswoman or a presidential campaigner or just a party girl on parade, the action around her is ceaseless madness, never-ending spontaneous limbs, yodelling orifices, creepy transformations, miniature people, non-sequitur anthropomorphisms, ad infinitum. When a man pours Betty's cure-all elixir on his peg leg, it turns instantly into a small third hand holding a cane, upon which he strolls away, because why not? When flowers get scared and flee, of course they leave tiny skeletons behind; a Bunsen burner flame lights a cigar with a match and then naturally burns itself. The juxtapositions aren't ironic or satiric or metaphoric, they just are, like the delusions of a schizophrenic. The surrealists never went so far.

The Fleischers had been mining their collective unconscious for years already, starting with the *Out of the Inkwell* shorts in 1918. But the Boop shorts are the acme of this unleashed sensibility – with their ubiquitous rhythmic

boogie beat and misfiring sight gags that are closer to nightmares, they are so much odder than Disney's competing cartoons that it's a wonder they were shown to the same audiences. Several of Boop's most famous films, including *Minnie the Moocher* (1932) and *Poor Cinderella* (1934), are missing, but corks like *Betty Boop, M.D.* (1932), *Betty Boop for President* (1932) and *Betty Boop's Rise to Fame* (1934) are there. Only one inclusion, 1937's *The Foxy Hunter*, was produced after the Code put a sleeved dress on Betty and made her an uncontroversial figure of maternal warmth. **Disc:** All the shorts are cleanly transferred from fine 1950s TV-syndication prints, sans Paramount logo.

BODY DOUBLE

Brian De Palma; USA 1984; Twilight Time/Region A
Blu-ray; 114 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features:
isolated score track, original theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The protagonist of *Body Double* – we can't say hero – is Jake Scully (Craig Wasson), a claustrophobic actor who can't hold on to his role, and a man who can't hold on to his women. Building his great edifice of metaphor, Brian De Palma plays several variations on the theme of audition as sexual evaluation, before finally merging the two, plunging Scully into the pornographic underworld, the mirror-image of the proper film industry. The film-within-a-film porno-shoot scene has Scully entering a wholly studio-bound new-wave erotic cabaret to the tune of Frankie Goes to Hollywood's 'Relax', before coupling with Holly Body (Melanie Griffith).

I would say that this, an example of total cinema on the level of Vincente Minnelli's 'Girl Hunt' number in *The Band Wagon* (1953) or Powell and Pressburger's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951), is *Body Double*'s identifiable high point – but the plain fact is that the film is a range of towering peaks. Its centrepiece is a nearly wordless double-pursuit that lasts for over 20 minutes of screen time, leading from the Hollywood Hills to a Rodeo Drive mall to a beachfront motel, and featuring our protagonist discreetly filching a pair of discarded panties along the way, like a common pervert. This moment is funny and human and indicting in the discomfort it induces, a perfect example of how De Palma can be at once drolly ironic about sex and sincerely, powerfully romantic. For not long after pocketing those panties Scully will be embracing their owner, and this moment, captured with carousel-like 360-degree camerawork and blatantly artificial rear-projection, is like something from Murnau's *Sunrise* (1927).

Entirely of its porno-chic moment, *Body Double* is both sex farce and tragedy – halves not at odds with one another but functioning at the same time. Like practically every other film De Palma has made, *Body Double*, about a man who falls in love with a dead woman who may not actually be dead at all, owes a debt to Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). A title from another of Hitch's films, *Stage Fright* (1949), would work perfectly well for it. Or, better yet: *Performance Anxiety*.

Disc: Another gorgeous 1080p product from Twilight Time – the film has never looked nearly so good for home consumption – though the

quick disappearance of the typical 3,000-disc limited run is enough to make one question the kindness of TT's existing small-batch model, which leaves so many consumers in the dust.

CODE NAME RUBY

Jan Nemec; Czech Republic 1996; Facets/Region
0 NTSC DVD; 80 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.55:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A true casualty of Iron Curtain cultural politics, Jan Nemec was for a brief moment the Czech New Wave's diamond-cut Kafka avatar, but the tanks of 1968 sent him into global exile, where his career wandered and his vision diffused, settling into a bemused menopausal airiness after he returned with the 1989 revolution.

This quilty, irreverent lark, the first of only a handful of films he's made since the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, wrestles with the traumas of real history as though it were a lawn game between tipsy lovers. The narrative trails after two hip youngsters – long-haired, poetry-loving air-traffic controller Jan Potmesil and manic pixie dream girl Lucie Rejchrtová (rather adorably sporting full-teeth braces) – as they whimsically traipse through Prague investigating the existence of the alchemical Philosopher's Stone, reputedly hunted first by the Nazis and then by the Allies and communists in the post-war years.

Coming across somewhat like a *National Treasure* prequel as reimagined by an eccentric and codgery New Waver, Nemec's film isn't invested in its own story but in its metaphorical reverberation (the folly of alchemy is an inventive way to look at the official ideology of the Eastern Bloc, attempting as it were to magically turn totalitarian lead into utopian gold). The form of the film slips and leaps, from archival footage to double-exposed abstractions to documentary (craftily using the real parade in Prague that celebrated the 50th anniversary of liberation by US troops, complete with actors dressed up as tough GIs in vintage jeeps), evoking textual ideas from both Kenneth Anger and Craig Baldwin, while Nemec's two young lovers often pass their scenes speaking in rhyming lyrics. (Still, a hunk of spontaneous gold does manifest, precipitating a shopping spree.)

So heavily coded with ancient symbolologies and poetic references it may just be nonsensical, Nemec's film is as dreamy and haunted as the director's 60s masterpieces, but it's also an ageing lion's fun-loving if erratic effort to stay young, hip and millennial.

Disc: Adequate transfer of a rather lambent film, but no frills, in the typical Facets fashion.

EARLY FASSBINDER

LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH/KATZELMACHER/
GODS OF THE PLAGUE/THE AMERICAN
SOLDIER/BEWARE OF A HOLY WHORE

West Germany 1969/69/69/70/70; Eclipse/
Region 1 DVD; 89/89/92/80/104 minutes; Aspect
Ratio 1.78:1/1.33:1/1.33:1/1.33:1/1.33:1

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Very few directorial careers divide themselves into distinct sections quite so distinctly as Rainer Werner Fassbinder's. There is the breakthrough period, beginning with 1971's *The Merchant of Four Seasons*. There is the following period



Object of obsession: *Body Double*

TALES FROM THE FAR SIDE

Some rare gems of early American cinema have been rescued thanks to collectors on the other side of the world

AMERICAN TREASURES FROM THE NEW ZEALAND FILM ARCHIVE

LYMAN H. HOWE'S FAMOUS RIDE ON A RUNAWAY TRAIN/HAPPY-GO-LUCKIES/STRONG BOY/UPSTREAM/BIRTH OF A HAT/THE LOVE CHARM/WON IN A CUPBOARD/THE ACTIVE LIFE OF DOLLY OF THE DAILIES #5, 'THE CHINESE FAN'/STORIES FROM AMERICAN NEWSREELS/ANDY'S STUMP SPEECH/VIRGINIAN TYPES/THE WHITE SHADOW

National Film Preservation Foundation; Region 0 DVD; 1914-29; 198 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: interactive screens about the films, illustrated booklet

Reviewed by Bryony Dixon

There are places in the world where cans of film wash up like flotsam and jetsam on a windward shore. The latest DVD set in the National Film Preservation Foundation's 'Treasures from American Archives' series (following sets on the avant-garde, social issues, 'the West' and two more general sets) is a collection of American films discovered in New Zealand. Acquired from collectors over many years by the national archive there, these lost American films ended up on the far side of the world as a consequence of the Antipodes being at the end of the film-distribution chain. One imagines that the costs of shipping old prints back to the distributors in the States outweighed their desire for their return, or perhaps they had been sold outright for the home market, as sometimes happened with older titles.

And thank goodness, for there are real treasures here. A lost John Ford film, a lost Hitchcock and some fascinating shorts from a range of genres: animation, an early comedy, an episode of a lost serial, trailers, a two-strip Technicolor romance. There are also various non-fiction shorts – one of which, *Lyman H. Howe's Famous Ride on a Runaway Train* (1921), has been reunited with its disc sound accompaniment. My personal favourite is a fragment of *Virginian Types*, a Pathécolor document of the inhabitants of the land that would become Shenandoah National Park, a few years before they were all evicted. It's romanticised for sure, but even so, a fascinating glimpse of the real West only a generation after its heyday. Also interesting is a comedy, *Won in a Cupboard* (1914), a vehicle for the charming Mabel Normand made by Mack Sennett's Keystone company. Normand was not only a great comedienne, physically adept and expressive enough for close-ups, but also directed many of her own films, marking a sea-change in how comic actors were seen by Hollywood producers and by the film-going public, who put pressure on the studios to credit and make stars of their favourite players.

There is plenty of great stuff to justify buying this DVD, although most will probably buy



Early Hitchcock: *The White Shadow* is among the New Zealand archive treasures


Cinema in the early period was a very international business, yet we are obliged to collect and preserve in a very national way

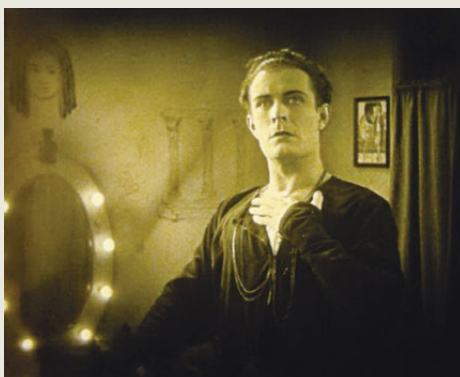
it for the John Ford feature or the incomplete Hitchcock film, *The White Shadow* (1924). Ford's *Upstream* (1927) is an untypical film for the director – a moving drama about an egotistical actor deserting his theatrical friends for fame on the London stage. The eagle-eyed among you will have noticed that *The White Shadow* is a British film and was in fact directed by Graham Cutts (although Hitchcock assisted, designed and wrote the script). Regrettably incomplete, it's a melodrama about good and bad twins, starring the American Betty Compson – effective in the

dual role – and a young Clive Brook. The Parisian nightclub sets where bad twin and reprehensible father are reunited were designed by Hitchcock and also evoke Cutts's later *The Rat* films in their fashionably underworld sleaziness.

As a British film *The White Shadow* is an exception to the general repatriation project that the NFPF 'Treasures' series is all about. The rather slender justification for this is that the film is an American export version, distributed by Selznick in the US. However, readers will be happy to hear that the NFPF has generously sent a copy to the BFI Archives.

The idea of the 'Treasures' sets – to repatriate lost American cinematic heritage – is an interesting one, raising questions about how cultural organisations can bring historic cinema to the public. Cinema, particularly in the earlier period, was a very international business, and yet we are obliged to collect and preserve in a very national way – a false and frustrating divide for most archivists. Our cultural experience of film in Britain, for example, is as much about American or French cinema as it is about British-produced cinema. It is understandable that governments apportioning scarce resources only want to fund the production of their particular country, but it's not an ideal way to support the preservation of cultural artefacts in archives full of productions from other nations, as film archives tend to be.

Let's hope the model of international sharing being pioneered by the National Film Preservation Foundation and its participating archives can be extended to other nations, and that we can one day more evenly distribute the world's cinematic gems. 



Lost-and-found Ford: *Upstream*

New releases

of international productions and increasing acclaim – we can't call it a 'late' period, for Fassbinder only lived to be 37. And then there is the early work, the subject of this new box-set from Criterion's barebones sub-label Eclipse.

The prolific Fassbinder's juvenilia includes more material than some filmmakers' entire bodies of work. *Early Fassbinder* isn't as wide-ranging as Arrow Films' nine-disc 1969-1972 commemorative collection, though neither can claim to be comprehensive – both lack 1970's improvisational one-off *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* and 1971's *Whity*, the 'western' whose behind-the-scenes madness would be the subject of *Beware of a Holy Whore*. Of the 11 features that Fassbinder completed for television and cinema before *Merchant*, there are five here.

The title of the first film that Fassbinder made with his cohorts in Munich's Antiteater group, *Love Is Colder than Death*, proves that the filmmaker's worldview was in place from the get-go, if not precisely his genius. The film's guiding lights are American *film noir* and post-structuralist European cinema, including that of Jean-Marie Straub, thanked for the contribution of a tracking shot of Landsberger Strasse at night. Fassbinder would essentially rework *Colder*'s basic plot elements – a triangular MMF affair between members of the criminal underclass ending with betrayal and death – in *Gods of the Plague*, an altogether more dynamic effort, memorable for DP Dietrich Lohmann's Caravaggio-esque lighting of Fassbinder's sovery-young homegrown superstars (Hanna Schygulla, Günther Kaufmann, Ingrid Caven).

Katzelmacher, adapted from an Antiteater stage production, details the petty vengeance stirred up when a Greek immigrant (played by Fassbinder) appears among the layabouts inhabiting a housing estate in suburban Munich. It's an affecting film, though even Fassbinder's greatest works can sometimes seem like elaborate deathtraps, and in its clean, interlocking tableaux, *Katzelmacher* is downright schematic.

These early works, all in grotty black-and-white, might commonly be described as austere, and a certain austerity never wholly left Fassbinder's work – outside Bresson, few filmmakers directed performers in a way so clearly calculated to complicate viewer identification. What changed was the introduction of another, contravening tendency, flamboyant and pathos-ridden: it was the tradition of the Hollywood melodrama and, placed in unresolved conflict with Fassbinder's grounding in European experimental theatre and alienation effects, this uneasy push-pull would fully engage and activate his gifts.

This change is attributed to the influence of Douglas Sirk, whose films Fassbinder gorged himself on in the uncharacteristic hiatus before making *Merchant*, although one can see Fassbinder already moving in this new direction in the hysterical *Beware of a Holy Whore*. The latter illustrates the dysfunctional family dynamics and brazenly homosexual milieu of a typical flying-by-the-seat-of-the-pants Fassbinder film, creatively fuelled by Cuba Libres and Leonard Cohen. Stuck in a Spanish hotel, an idle group of technicians and actors waste time passing

around bad karma like the clap. Lou Castel is a monstrous if physically flattering directorial alter ego, Schygulla stars as herself, and the paychecking American Eddie Constantine impassively watches over the unfolding melodrama like some antediluvian lizard. In this cruelly funny farce, we are no longer looking at the work of a tiro whose ambitions outstrip his abilities, but that of a tested filmmaker who has begun to explore the full extent of his powers.

Disc: Nothing-but-notes packaging, but content looking and sounding significantly better than prior Wellspring (US) and Arrow (UK) releases.

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Roger Corman; USA 1960; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: commentary by Jonathan Rigby and Marcus Hearn, commentary by Roger Corman, video essay by David Cairns, interviews with Vincent Price and Joe Dante, booklet with writing by Price and new essay by Tim Lucas

Reviewed by Kim Newman

The first in a series of richly coloured, engagingly overripe gothic horror films crafted by producer-director Roger Corman in the early 1960s, this introduced name star Vincent Price to the works of Edgar Allan Poe. It benefits from Richard Matheson's literate but knowing script, Floyd Crosby's Eastmancolor CinemaScope cinematography and Daniel Haller's imaginative if economical sets – which contrive to deliver the epitome of widescreen claustrophobia, emphasised by Les Baxter's crashing lounge-horror score.

Though Matheson embroiders Poe's slender storyline, the film still boils down to four people glooming around the vast interior of a crumbling mansion, awaiting a last-reel fire

(and the shocking return from the tomb of mad Madeline Usher) to bring the roof down on their heads before the fragments sink into the misty tarn under the end credits. Price shows an unwelcome visitor the hideous pop-art portraits of his evil ancestors like a malicious tour guide, bringing just the right touch of camp to suffering, smugly doomed antihero Roderick Usher, a white-haired neurotic whose overly keen senses keep him in a perpetual quiver of torment.

It has to be said that juvenile leads Mark Damon (with an Elvis hairdo and knit brows) and Myrna Fahey (only impressive when insane and bloody) can scarcely hold the screen against the magisterial star, which prompted Corman to cast heavier hitters such as Barbara Steele, Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre and Jack Nicholson in the later Poe/Price films.

The plot covers burial alive, incest, monomania, a family curse and sadism, establishing a formula that would serve for a whole cycle of delicious terrors to come. It builds on the foundation of Poe in a manner that would transform American horror as psychedelia set in, establishing the long-dead author as a box-office name to be reckoned with and enshrining Price's horror stardom as the well-spoken decadent bogeyman of the 1960s.

Disc: Besides the sumptuous Blu-ray transfer – which picks out details obscured in earlier home-video presentations of this title – Arrow's disc includes substantial featurettes from Joe Dante and Jonathan Rigby (who aptly muses that Blu-ray might not be kind to the butler's old-age makeup), an archive interview with Price and an interesting visual essay by David Cairns assessing the film's relationship with Poe's story. A nicely designed booklet includes writing on the film by Price and Tim Lucas.



The Fall of the House of Usher It builds on the foundation of Poe in a manner that would transform American horror as psychedelia set in

THE FINAL PROGRAMME

Robert Fuest; UK 1973; Network/Region 2 DVD;
Certificate tbc; Aspect Ratio 1.75:1; Features:
trailers, Italian title sequence, image gallery

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Boasting the fairly unique credit “designed, written and directed” by Robert Fuest, this adaptation of Michael Moorcock’s novel was Fuest’s follow-up to the successful Dr Phibes pictures. Poised in the history of science-fiction cinema between Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* and Derek Jarman’s *Jubilee*, *The Final Programme* is set in a near-future which happens to be the end of the current era of life on Earth (“the long, dark age”). Nobel Prize-winning dropout Jerry Cornelius (Jon Finch) wanders through collapsing society as he copes with tangled family problems. Meanwhile a group of scientist-mystics commanded by the vampirish Miss Brunner (Jenny Runacre) are running the ‘final programme’, which will supposedly create an all-purpose human, an immortal hermaphrodite to serve as new messiah for the dawning age.

Before *Star Wars*, it was not only possible for a commercially released science fiction to be arty and philosophical but almost mandatory, as if studio heads didn’t expect to be able to *understand* the films but hoped that the kids in the audience would get the point or at least go along with the style. *The Final Programme* has Bondian action elements, and Finch’s cool-to-the-point-of-callous Jerry is a shrugging superhero from a London counterculture halfway between the Kinks and the New Romantics, dressing only in dandyish black-and-white and living off Bell’s and chocolate biscuits. The sexual ambiguity, which touches on incest and lesbianism as well as tending towards hermaphroditism, prefigures glam rock but is taken less seriously in the film than in the novel (Moorcock disowned the movie). As in the Phibes films, the plot is a machine that self-destructs along with a great many guest-star character actors (Patrick Magee, Sterling Hayden, George Coulouris, Harry Andrews, Sarah Douglas, Derrick O’Connor), but the design is paramount, extending to remarkable costumes and a distinctive *Avengers*-like coolness of performance.

It feels like an entry in a lengthy series of films of which only this has survived, with a complex backstory, iconic characters and an end-of-a-saga feel which suggest that a whole world existed before the destruction visited upon it here. Some of the film’s signifiers of decadence (mud-wrestling) have dated, but there are a few palpable hits (Miss Brunner makes a telephone call to a computer) to set beside its lucky fashion guesses.

Disc: Network’s release lacks the Fuest-Runacre commentary track from the Anchor Bay Region 1 release but does include widescreen and uncropped standard-frame versions of the film.

THE LIFE OF OHARU

Mizoguchi Kenji; Japan 1952; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 136 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: Tanaka Kinuyo documentary, Dudley Andrew commentary and audio essay, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Because it was made for Toho rather than Daiei, this was the major omission from Eureka’s otherwise near-comprehensive eight-title



Down on her luck: *The Life of Oharu*

survey of Mizoguchi’s 1950s output (shortly to be reissued on Blu-ray) – a particular shame, as it was one of the standard-bearers of Japanese cinema at a time when the west was belatedly waking up to its glories.

A long-term dream project for Mizoguchi, which in many ways exemplifies his interest in the particular plight of women throughout Japan’s history, *The Life of Oharu* traces the fall of its title character (Tanaka Kinuyo) from teenage Imperial Court servant to 50-year-old prostitute. Much of her story is told in flashback, so that we are never in any doubt that despite a few brief upticks her fortune’s dominant trend is firmly downwards – and usually for reasons entirely beyond her control, be they by innocent association (three of her lovers meet violent deaths at the hands of bandits or the state) or forces embedded in the nation’s social and cultural fabric. Even Buddhist temples fail to offer the expected spiritual sanctuary.

If this suggests a relentlessly depressing experience, that’s not entirely fair. For starters, Mizoguchi’s exquisitely refined set pieces (many key scenes are filmed in long, fluid takes, sometimes lasting several minutes) make the film an aesthetic marvel from beginning to end. More importantly, his refusal to present Oharu as a passive victim or to draw simplistic conclusions about male-female relationships (the women are often just as oppressive, and the men are more likely to be selfishly careless than actively malicious) makes her simultaneously tragic and oddly heroic. Even when reduced to begging in the street, she remains defiantly her own woman – seen to most memorable effect when she turns the tables on a pilgrim who’s trying to show her off as an example of the iniquities of temptation.

Disc: For the most part this new high-definition restoration is miraculously good. Age-related blemishes remain, but this is a distinct notch above Eureka’s Mizoguchi or the BFI’s Ozu titles from the same era. Extras include a documentary

about Tanaka Kinuyo’s 1949 American tour as a Japanese cultural envoy, a commentary (over the first 28 minutes) and extensively illustrated audio essay by Dudley Andrew, and a booklet essay on the film by Gilberto Perez.

DOCUMENTARIES BY SERGEI LOZNITSA

LANDSCAPE/BLOCKADE/REVUE

Russia 2003/2006/2008; New Wave Films/
Region 2 DVD; 60/51/80 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1/1.37:1/1.37:1 (anamorphic where necessary)

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Sergei Loznitsa came to widespread attention with his two fiction features *My Joy* (2010) and *In the Fog* (2012), but he’s been a prolific and highly distinctive documentary-maker since the 1990s – and just how distinctive is amply demonstrated by New Wave Films’ welcome sampling.

The only film with a (then) contemporary setting, 2003’s *Landscape* is also by far the most formally rigorous, consisting almost exclusively of a series of 360-degree pans (separated by brief wipes to and from black) around aspects of an impoverished rural village. The first dozen minutes or so wordlessly map the general environment before Loznitsa’s attention turns to a growing bus queue, pulling focus from face to face (entire personal histories are embedded in wrinkles and folds) while eavesdropping on conversations concerning day-to-day headline-living minutiae, family and work problems and the war in Chechnya, regularly interspersed with gallows humour (“I’m not dead yet – I’ll make it to 50”).

The riveting *Blockade* is assembled entirely from silent archive footage of the nearly three-year siege of Leningrad (1941–44). With no commentary or spoken content, Loznitsa and his sound designer Vladimir Golovnitsky instead pack their soundtrack with a meticulously realistic impression of what a live sync-sound recording might plausibly have sounded like. Yes, it’s artificial as hell (great documentaries have always been built on artifice) but it brings the events to life with an immediacy that historians can’t match, as we see Leningrad citizens stockpiling books (presumably for fuel) and painstakingly transporting their public statues for protection, and the depredations of the siege itself, with corpses ignored as they lie in the street.

The not-dissimilar *Revue* sources its footage from propaganda films of the 1950s and 60s, with industrial progress and collective farming well to the fore, plus the strictly socialist-realist entertainments that workers watched in their leisure hours (rigidly ideological plays and sanitised folk culture abound). Everyone is blithely optimistic about the ultimate fruits of their labour, expecting true communism to be achieved in 20 years (although children are less likely to toe the Party line than adults – one small boy pauses so long after being asked whether he likes to work that the interviewer discreetly changes subject). As with *Blockade*, there’s no commentary or context: Loznitsa trusts viewers to make up their own minds about what they’re seeing.

Disc: Transfers and subtitles are fine across the board.



Television

BELFAGOR

ORTF; France 1965; Yamato Video/Region 2 DVD; 362 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: retrospective featurette, Italian title sequence, chapter breaks

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

There are spooky goings-on at the Louvre in this rumbustious 1960s remake of a popular movie serial from the silent era, in which an androgynous masked supervillain prowls the Paris museum at night. Created by Arthur Bernède, *Belfégor, ou le fantôme du Louvre*, named for the biblical demon known to occasionally take female form, was released as a book, magazine serial and four-part movie (which in turn was then novelised) in 1927. In remaking it for television, director and co-writer Claude Barma updated the story (a search for the lost treasure of the Kings of France) for the post-nuclear age, setting out his thesis in the opening scenes, in which a young science student meets an old man who obsessively catalogues connections between unexplained events while preparing for the apocalypse. Thus rationality goes head-to-head with the spirit of adventure, with viewers enticed, like the student hero, into taking a leap into the unknown.

Belfégor (Belfagor in this Italian version) is now a zombie, raised from the dead by members of the Rosicrucian Order to find an alchemical material with radioactive properties linked to an Egyptian statue in the museum. Juliette Gréco co-stars as the society dame with something to hide and Yves Rénier is the callow hero whose precepts all fall apart. A huge hit in France and on the Continent, the show still works thanks to Barma's full-blooded handling of the material, though admittedly there are some longueurs along the way, the scenario padded out with several romantic entanglements when away from its impressively large and well-used museum set.

Disc: Originally screened in four 70-minute parts, the show was later repeated in 13 half-hour episodes, something respected through careful chaptering in this Italian DVD – which unfortunately isn't English-friendly, though it improves on the French video release by including a retrospective documentary. Shot in black-and-white on 35mm, the transfer is generally pleasing and mostly blemish-free.

CROCODILE SHOES

Big Boy Productions/Red Rooster/BBC1; UK 1994-96; Acorn Media/Region 2 DVD; 659 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: stills gallery, text biographies

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

This enjoyable if slightly ramshackle curiosity was the vision of one-man band Jimmy Nail, here serving as creator, sole writer, co-producer, star and performer of the theme song. A serialised comedy-drama, this genre hybrid certainly doesn't want for ambition, incorporating social commentary, music, drugs and gangsters in a sprawling narrative that uses the dismantling of the industrial North as a backdrop for the adventures in London and Nashville of Nail's dour Candide-like naif, a lathe worker from Newcastle named Jed Shepperd who dreams of becoming a country-and-western singer. James Wilby, nicely cast against type, is Adrian, the sybaritic, Porsche-driving, coke-snorting



Crocodile Shoes The sprawling narrative uses the dismantling of the industrial North as a backdrop for the adventures of Jimmy Nail's dour Candide-like naif

record-company talent scout with a penchant for micturition in public places who plans to use the innocent Geordie to revive his flagging career. Alex Kingston co-stars as the lusty, high-flying barrister who is two-timing Wilby with his married boss (and who takes one for the team by appearing in a gratuitous nude scene).

The second series flounders badly, emphasising the least convincing aspect of the show – the crime subplot – by having Adrian's bad luck catch up with him and Jed framed and jailed for his murder as part of a giant and unconvincing conspiracy. The humour initially helps deflect the plot's avalanche of clichés, but when Jed's luckless sister (Melanie Hill) is charged with murdering her husband on their wedding night, the show plunges into the ludicrous, never to find its feet again.

Disc: The disc easily replicates the gritty look of the first series but gets a little fuzzier for the second.

SIX CENTURIES OF VERSE

Thames TV/Channel 4; UK 1984; Network/Region 2 DVD; Certificate E; 410 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

This primetime series by Anthony Thwaite, with John Gielgud acting as chaperone, is

made up of 16 half-hour episodes and pretty much lives up to its grand title, beginning with Old English and Chaucer (with subtitles) and concluding with Ted Hughes.

Despite so grand a vision, the aim is modest: to make poetry accessible and intelligible with no-frills readings of the texts, aided by succinct dollops of historical context. The mixture of staged performances and plain reading is therefore not especially adventurous, with the big-name cast – including the likes of Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Ian Richardson and Lee Remick – predictably appearing by firesides, in church or out in the country to privilege words over presentation.

Arranged more or less chronologically, some of the verse is clustered into periods, while some authors inevitably get an edition dedicated to them. Julian Glover does especially well in the episodes looking back at *Beowulf* and another devoted solely to Wordsworth; other individual highlights include Anthony Hopkins's restrained but stirring performance of Dylan Thomas's 'Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night' and Stacy Keach's magical recitation of Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' in a rainy forest.

Disc: Shot entirely on grainy 16mm, the episodes look surprisingly colourful and clean throughout.

New releases



SERPENT'S PATH/ EYES OF THE SPIDER

Kurosawa Kiyoshi; Japan 1998; Third Window/Region 0 DVD; Certificate 15; 168 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by Jasper Sharp

Leading light of Japan's independent scene for more than two decades, Kurosawa Kiyoshi is best known outside his home turf for J-horror contributions such as *Pulse* (2001) and *Retribution* (2006) and abstruse genre-bending exercises like the elliptical eco-fable *Charisma* (1999) and his award-winning foray into arthouse, *Tokyo Sonata* (2008). Throughout his career, however, he has skipped across genres, maintaining an idiosyncratic style. This is as true for his early 8mm *jishu eiga* (amateur films) of the late 1970s as it is for his 'official' theatrical debut, the erotic 'pink' film *Kandagawa Pervert Wars* (1983), or his television and straight-to-video V-cinema work of the 1990s.

This diptych of Kurosawa's two final works in the V-cinema field, released as a single package, provides a fine example of his versatility and virtuosity. Though intended for video, these low-budget genre pieces, shot back-to-back in a mere two weeks on super 16mm, were later blown up for cinema release after the success of Kurosawa's theatrical psychological thriller *Cure* (1997). Ostensibly disconnected stories, they fit together like two sides of a Möbius strip. Both centre on the violent murder of a young girl and feature the V-cinema stalwart Aikawa Shô as Nijima, a white-collar worker with a dangerous thirst for revenge.

Serpent's Path, a gangster movie with a horrific twist, unfolds in Kurosawa's characteristically spare style, punctuated by moments of abrupt violence delivered in a matter-of-fact fashion, as low-level yakuza Miyashita (Kagawa Teruyuki) enlists the mysterious Nijima's help in seeking revenge on the murderer of his eight-year-old daughter. Keeping their captive chained in a warehouse, they replay images of the innocent victim on a video monitor, recounting the horrors inflicted upon her, as the camera prowls at an unsettlingly objective distance. Kurosawa's deployment of wide-angle lenses, exploiting the full depth of the screen and the masterful choreography of the moving camera in tandem with the action, is striking. So too is the concise storytelling, with its plot (by *Ring* screenwriter Takahashi Hiroshi) wrong-footing the viewer consistently as to where it's headed, like the serpent of the title. The effect is one of gazing into the dark abyss of human cruelty.

Eyes of the Spider, in which Nijima is hired by an old school friend's makeshift outfit of contract killers, shows another side to Kurosawa's method. This time the style is starker, consisting largely of static shots with a notable absence of background music – a meditative approach at odds with the conventions of the revenge thriller.

Though *Eyes of the Spider* is arguably less compelling than its companion piece, taken together the two provide a fascinating insight into the early career, largely unseen outside Japan, of one of the country's most inventive and challenging directors. Let's hope it leads to a long-overdue DVD release of Kurosawa's masterpiece *Cure*, inexplicably overlooked by UK distributors during the post-*Ring* J-horror boom.



Artist's impression: *Van Gogh*

Disc: Both films are included on a single region-free dual-layer disc and are presented in their original 1.85:1 aspect ratios, with a clean transfer that retains the grain of the super 16mm format they were shot in. No extras.

TWO MEN IN MANHATTAN

Jean-Pierre Melville; France 1959; Cohen Media Group/Region A Blu-ray; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: taped conversation between critics Jonathan Rosenbaum and Ignaty Vishnevetsky, essay by Ginette Vincendeau, trailers

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Jean-Pierre Melville's reputation rests on ten films, from 1949's *Le Silence de la mer* to 1972's *Un flic*, but in the cracks between there's a handful of neglected beauties, holy grails for the devoted Melvillian. *Magnet of Doom* (1963) is still AWOL, but this oddball, produced and released right between *Bob le flambeur* (1956) and *Leon Morin, Priest* (1961), has arrived, restored and Blu-rayed, like a forgotten Aznavour ballad recorded in a Brooklyn basement.

Set and largely shot in New York, the film engages two major Melville areas of fascination – America and the legacy of the Resistance – in a mystery in which two French journalists track down a missing UN diplomat through the swanky modern nightspots of Manhattan. Melville plays the lead himself, a hangdog reporter for Agence France-Presse with a shrugging trenchcoat and a coffee ring under each eye. Accompanied by a congenial but dissolute drunk of a paparazzo (Pierre Grasset), he tracks down the women in the missing man's life – a Broadway actress, a cabaret stripper, a torch singer, a Marilyn Monroe-esque hooker working a 'Franco-Asiatic' brothel – in a virtual tour of modern American femininity as performance. The film slowly shifts its gears, characteristically, and the mystery's resolution opens up old ethical anxieties running right back to the war.

For better or worse, Melville is no ambitious ethnographer; the movie's relationship with America is late-night dreamy and as solipsistic as a weary insomniac, observant of native colour on the streets but disconnected and cynical, as if the film, like the characters, is just killing time before going back home. It does contain, however, some of Melville's loveliest travelling shots (the long, slow track through the recording studio, around the band to eventually reveal Glenda Leigh's crooning chanteuse, is hypnotic), and provides an off-centre vision of 1959 New York that could dovetail provocatively with Cassavetes's *Shadows*,

filmed in the same neighbourhoods around the same time, and released weeks later that autumn.

Disc: Beautiful digital remastering and inky-depths-of-night transfer, with a geeky-awkward sit-down chat between critics Jonathan Rosenbaum and Ignaty Vishnevetsky, and clarifying essay by Ginette Vincendeau.

VAN GOGH

Maurice Pialat; France 1991; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 158 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: 'Van Gogh' documentary short, interviews, deleted scenes, trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

The first image we see in *Van Gogh* is of a painter's hand (Pialat's own, apparently), furiously scraping and scumbling a mass of bright blue paint across a canvas. The energy is symptomatic: we're in the final two months of Vincent's life, during which he produced 70 paintings and more than 30 drawings. He was staying in Auvers-sur-Oise, a village north-west of Paris, under the care of Dr Gachet, and in Pialat's account he also finds time to embark on an affair with Gachet's teenage daughter, frolic with Renoir-esque hookers on the banks of the river, and occasionally nip back to Paris to argue with his brother Théo and cavort vigorously in a Montmartre *boîte* where Toulouse-Lautrec performs impromptu on the trombone. (We've already seen Vincent doing a wickedly obscene impersonation of T-L to amuse an alfresco lunch party.)

As will be evident, Pialat has little truck with strict biographical detail. Rather than the solemn biopics of a tormented artist favoured by Minnelli, Paul Cox, Altman et al, and scorning traditional narrative structure, he gives us an impressionist picture of the post-impressionist painter, temperamental and subject to unpredictable mood swings. "Some days painting revolts me," Vincent complains, "I've done nothing great." Given that Pialat himself, notoriously mercurial, initially trained as an artist ("I'd rather have been an average painter than a great filmmaker," he observes in an interview included with this release), it's tempting to see his penultimate feature as something of a self-portrait.

Jacques Dutronc, with his sunken eyes and frail physique, gives an affecting sense of Vincent's vulnerability, making his final suicide credible for all his febrile creativity. Pialat creates around him a busy rural community, intrigued but not obsessed by this eccentric outsider; one of the film's most moving scenes doesn't involve him at all, when Dr Gachet's housekeeper recalls how her teenage son died in the massacre of the Commune. And in the final sequence Vincent's death is lamented but accorded scarcely more weight than the landlady of his auberge having injured her foot. Artists, we're to understand, are all-important but not vital. Pialat's fierce and uncompromising vision isn't the last word on Van Gogh – not that he ever claimed it was – but it lodges as indelibly in the mind as Vincent's own paintings.

Disc: An exemplary transfer; the colour does full justice to its subject. Generous extras include the 1965 black-and-white short that Pialat made about the painter. **S**

F FOR FRIENDSHIP

MY LUNCHES WITH ORSON

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN
HENRY JAGLOM AND ORSON WELLES

Edited with an introduction by Peter Biskind,
Metropolitan Books, 306pp, \$28/£18.02, ISBN
0805097252

ORSON WELLES AND ROGER HILL

A FRIENDSHIP IN THREE ACTS

By Todd Tarbox, BearManor Media, 320pp,
\$21.95/£15.50, ISBN 159393260

Reviewed by Ben Walters

Near the end of his life, Orson Welles told his friend Roger 'Skipper' Hill about an idea for *The Magic Show*, a compendium of illusions Welles had been shooting for some years: "I play the part of an ageing magician, a pompous old-time conjurer doing all the big tricks in the middle of his act, but he's losing his memory, and he can't remember how anything works. He forgets to put the woman back together, or to bring the floating lady down. He's led away and the theatre is empty."

It's depressingly easy to see Welles's final years in this. Unable throughout his last decade to bring to fruition any of the cinematic enterprises he set in motion, the once-great sorcerer of the screen left a handful of intriguing proposals dangling, tantalisingly incomplete, on his departure in 1985. There were the ongoing legal problems hobbling the almost-finished *The Other Side of the Wind*; the struggle to recruit a bona fide star for the political satire *The Big Brass Ring*; the intermittent interest animating *The Dreamers*, a pared down adaptation of two stories by Karen Blixen; a version of *King Lear* perpetually on the brink of securing French government funding; *The Cradle Will Rock*, a sensational tale of activist theatre-making from Welles's own youthful Broadway career; and *The Magic Show* itself.

The list is worth making, if only to dispel any lingering notion that old Welles was a feckless blowhard coasting on past glories. The failure of these projects was not for want of trying, as two new books make clear. Both *My Lunches with Orson: Conversations Between Henry Jaglom and Orson Welles* and *Orson Welles and Roger Hill: A Friendship in Three Acts* are based on series of recorded conversations from the last three years of Welles's life, and are punctuated with frequent ruminations on the logistics of a living career in which the attempt to realise adequately resourced, creatively satisfying projects is in constant tension with the imperative for "grocery-paying" gigs.



Orson Welles: a conjurer who's forgotten how to work his tricks?

These books show much more than that, of course. Essentially transcripts of conversations held over lunch (in the case of Jaglom) or the telephone (in the case of Hill), their basic appeal lies in the access they offer to Welles's relatively unmediated voice – relatively, because they are edited and lightly fabulated in ways of which he would surely approve. (Welles did much the same in *This Is Orson Welles*, a volume of conversations between himself and Peter Bogdanovich recorded in the late 60s and early 70s). This conversational Welles is witty, charming, knowledgeable, irascible, vulnerable, occasionally outrageous and consistently compelling.

The Jaglom conversations, held at Ma Maison, the restaurant that served as Welles's unofficial Los Angeles office, skew towards industry talk – unsurprisingly, given the location and Jaglom's position as a young filmmaker. As

well as hearing reminiscences on subjects ranging from David O. Selznick's pathological competitiveness at charades to the time Garbo blanked Dietrich, we witness Welles holding court: he dismisses Richard Burton's request to bring Liz over to say hello ("as you can see, I'm in the middle of my lunch") but greets Jack Lemmon with a rousing "THERE HE IS!" followed by a long chat about comedians and talk shows.

The book's introduction, by its editor Peter Biskind, salivates at the idea of Welles being "sexist, racist, homophobic [and] vulgar". This over-eggs it, though he has curious ideas about Irish malice, is discreditably panicky about Aids and queasily admits to *Lolita*-ish stirrings with regard to the 11-year-old Elizabeth Taylor (her again), with whom he had worked on *Jane Eyre*. Welles also dismisses Fuller, Lang, Hitchcock, von Sternberg, Kazan, Powell and Pressburger,

the Pompidou Centre, art deco and plenty more – but such negativity is in context largely constructive and balanced by praise for Oliver Reed, Gary Cooper, Max Reinhardt and even, in a backhanded way, Pauline Kael, whose article ‘Raising Kane’ was so deleterious to Welles’s reputation (“I love Pauline, because she writes at length about actors... I think she’s wrong a lot of the time, but she’s always interesting”).

Though recorded contemporaneously, the conversations with Hill reach back earlier into Welles’s life and have a more personal character – again unsurprisingly, given that their relationship began when Hill taught the 11-year-old Welles at the Todd School in Illinois, and given that the book is edited by Hill’s grandson, Todd Tarbox, who is also the son of one of Welles’s classmates. (As the title suggests, Tarbox structures his material as a play, though it is without drama.)

Twenty years Welles’s senior, Hill was arguably his key role model. “In my own youth,” Welles insists, “my every expression was in some way an imitation of you,” and he pins on Hill his tendencies to floridly acrobatic prose and rueful self-deprecation. As notable as Welles’s instant devotion to this worldly, inspirational and kindly man is the apparent lack of any comparable rapport with boys his own age. But this is easily explained by the astonishing precocity, verbal and artistic, documented here in letters and other materials from Welles’s adolescence; and by the full-blooded support for Welles’s professional ambitions and accomplishments that Hill and his wife, Hortense, lavished on the tiro theatre and radio star.

Professional and intellectual pursuits notwithstanding, the subject that implicitly pervades these books is friendship. Friendships were thorny in both Welles’s work – think of Kane and Leland, Othello and Iago, Quinlan and

‘I love Pauline [Kael], because she writes at length about actors... I think she’s wrong a lot of the time, but she’s always interesting’

Menzies, Falstaff and Hal, Harry Lime and Holly Martins – and his life. Curdled love was one of his leitmotifs. It’s striking that, while he evinces disdain for many (Bogart, Olivier, Chaplin), Welles’s real rancour is reserved for once best-beloveds like John Houseman and Bogdanovich.

Welles and Hill survived early professional collaboration (they wrote a play and co-edited Shakespeare when Welles was a teenager) to enjoy six decades of affection; there’s real poignancy to the duo’s comparisons of their elderly ailments (Hill died in 1990, aged 95). But most poignant is the letter Skipper wrote to the 25-year-old Orson on the occasion of his first divorce. “Your real need, I feel, is not for fewer ties; it is for greater ones,” Hill wrote. “Welles, as a solo wonder-worker, will never be truly happy.” There’s no surfeit of true happiness in these pages, and Welles left many ladies floating. But the wonders remain, and the friendship. ☺

DEREK JARMAN'S SKETCHBOOKS

Edited by Stephen Farthing and Ed Webb-Ingall, Thames & Hudson, 256pp, £28, ISBN 0500516944

Reviewed by Brian Dillon

In a photograph taken in the mid-1960s, while he was a student at the Slade, the teenage Derek Jarman sprawls sunlit in a leather armchair. To his right is a theatrically fat candlestick, to his left a lectern on which rests a huge book through which he’s paging with a rapt expression; his large, florid handwriting is unmistakable on the last page. You can see why Jarman pasted the picture into a similar volume in 1991: it’s a portrait of the artist as tiro magus, relishing the mystique of the maker and his marks. By the early 1990s Jarman had filled about two dozen such books, starting with smaller sketchbooks and switching in 1985 to handmade Venetian photo albums, a foot square, that he’d found in an ancient stationery shop in Florence. *Derek Jarman’s Sketchbooks* selects pages from about 30 of his ‘portable studios’ and it’s a gorgeous though ultimately frustrating guide to his working methods as artist, writer and director.

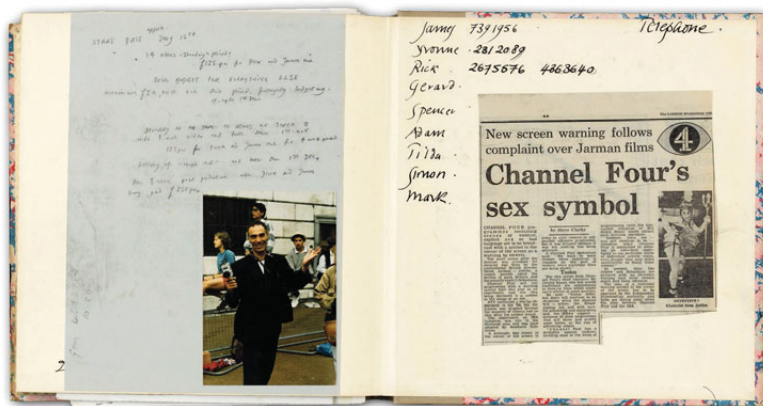
In a diary entry from 1989, Jarman mentions having rediscovered a tranche of his old “notebooks” but editors Stephen Farthing and Ed Webb-Ingall prefer to call them sketchbooks, signalling with some justification their status as works of art in themselves. (They overstate their case when they claim that the books are “the most vital and comprehensive evidence of his creative energy” – surely that’s the films?) Here are the student’s touchingly derivative abstract drawings, the young designer’s sketches for stage sets, the meticulous paper edits needed to produce his early super 8 films, printed invitations to view works such as *Art of Mirrors* and *A Journey to Avebury* at his Butler’s Wharf warehouse studio. Drawings, Polaroids, diagrams, typed scripts and fountain-penned notes fill what the editors call Jarman’s “ritualistic recipe books”.

Among the ingredients that went into the films, and later into books like *Modern Nature* and *Dancing Ledge*, are many compelling visual

scraps: Jarman discovers locations for *Jubilee*, visits Prospect Cottage at Dungeness for the first time, auditions actors for *Caravaggio*. The sketchbooks devour imagery – fragments of paintings, Jarman’s own photographs of his Kentish garden, crudely printed screen grabs from early video edits – as well as lines from his beloved Shakespeare, Donne and Blake. As Jarman’s partner Keith Collins, who contributes an elegant afterword, reminds us, he was in some ways a traditional artist – Collins notes the care and considerable time he devoted to decorating the sketchbooks with thick black paint and gold lettering – but also an enthusiastic opportunist when it came to new technology. Some of the most informative entries are concerned with the director’s ad hoc adaptations between video and the super 8 that flows like a jewel-hued stream through his mature work.

Predictably, Collins also provides a deal of the most useful commentary on individual books or pages, recalling for example Jarman’s rage at the homophobic culture of the 1980s. (He kept newspaper cuttings about the controversy surrounding Channel 4’s showing of *Sebastiane* and *Jubilee* in 1985, and even a frothing letter from Mary Whitehouse.) Some of the other contextual essays are less enlightening, rehearsing aspects of Jarman’s life and career already gone into elsewhere, not least in his own books. Toyah Willcox, who acted in *Jubilee* and *The Tempest*, and Neil Tennant of Pet Shop Boys offer the most engaging biographical reminiscences, Willcox recalling the constant presence of a sketchbook on set as blueprint and talisman. But the editors’ own introduction feels cursory and offers no explanation for notable absences: are there sketchbooks, for instance, for *The Tempest* or Jarman’s work on Ken Russell’s *The Devils*? Image captions skimp on materials and media in favour of platitudes such as “Jarman is in conversation with himself”.

That’s not wholly to disparage the present volume; it’s wonderful to have in print even the partial view of his alchemical modus operandi that *Derek Jarman’s Sketchbooks* provides. But for all its attractions the book seems like a coffee-table excuse for a fully glossed and comprehensive catalogue raisonné of Jarman’s burgeoning plans and completed projects. That work remains to be done, and the sketchbooks would surely be at its heart. ☹



Blueprint: Derek Jarman's Sketchbooks

THE VIEW FROM THE TRAIN

CITIES AND OTHER LANDSCAPES

By Patrick Keiller, Verso Books, 288pp, £14.99, ISBN 1781681406

Reviewed by Owen Hatherley

This anthology presents 30 years of much the same things: the attempt to transform the manmade landscape by looking at it; the investigation into the spaces of a “peculiarly English capitalism”; and the fixation on the consequences arising from the evident absence in the present of the future as it was envisaged during the writer-director’s youth. Accordingly, it’s sometimes easier to approach Patrick Keiller as a politico-spatial theorist than as a filmmaker; still, there are several insights into Keiller’s attitude to film itself to be found here.

Keiller hazards occasional definitions of his practice – “architectural cinematography”, “film as spatial critique” – and several films and one or two TV programmes are discussed. In the essay ‘Architecture, Palimpsest and Landscape’ (1983), he lauds the location work on *Z Cars*, noting how the desolation of Kirkby – Newtown in the series – would be different if filmed by a “tear-jerker” like Alan Bleasdale: the desolation that in the 60s and 70s stood for the emptiness of a future waiting to be filled, by the 80s signified the space of a

decisive failure. The essay moves on to horror and (another later-to-be-regular fixation) the sublime, oddly dismissing Cronenberg’s *Shivers* and *Rabid*, two of the most architectural horror films, before shifting to the subjective role of apparently “innocent” landscapes in *Night of the Living Dead*.

An essay ostensibly on ‘Port Statistics’ focuses on the research behind 1997’s *Robinson in Space*, an attempt to register visually the familiar spaces of decline (a rotting Georgian house in Toxteth) and the unfamiliar spaces of neoliberal success (the vast, automated spaces of the port at Sheerness). Though Keiller is fearless in exploring the new material spaces of English “sado-masochistic” or “gentlemanly” capitalism – logistics sheds, malls, prisons, hotels – he states a preference for looking out of the window, as opposed to looking at the computer. In ‘Popular Science’, he reveals how much of 1994’s *London* was directly derived from views from the flat he was renting at the time in south London.

This approach of “transforming” via looking is eventually related to early cinema. In an essay related to his installation project *The City of the Future*, Keiller writes of the unedited “phantom rides”, shot from moving trains, buses and trams, seen in the films of Lumière or Mitchell and Kenyon; a similar view appears repeatedly in his (largely unseen) 2000 documentary *The Dilapidated Dwelling*, where what is being shown is the continuity of this landscape and that of nearly a century earlier,



Keiller jars: ‘film as spatial critique’

the non-existence in the actual 21st century of a qualitatively superior “new space”.

Filmmaking here is almost an act of frustration – a trained architect, Keiller despairs of the degeneration of avant-garde ideas, with their visions of an automated, self-constructing New Babylon, into the fetishising of (literally) overvalued existing space. He comes close to suggesting that he makes films because he cannot design London County Council estates. This Keiller sometimes sees optimistically, as in his citation of Kuleshov, describing filmic montage as “the creation of a new earthly terrain that does not exist anywhere” – and elsewhere more grimly, as in a quotation from Witold Gombrowicz that he uses more than once: “when one does not have what one wants, one must want what one has.”

THE SEARCHERS

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN LEGEND

By Glenn Frankel, Bloomsbury, 416pp, £20, ISBN 1608191052

Reviewed by Tom Charity

Where to begin? John Ford liked to open on movement, reported one of his regular screenwriters, Frank S. Nugent. Alan LeMay’s fine novel *The Searchers* begins with the Edwards household coming under attack from Indians. Nugent and Ford admired this opening for its economy and excitement but placed the scene later, starting instead with the arrival of Uncle Ethan (Amos in the novel), dusty and alone, a friendly face – family – but an interloper all the same, an outsider who will be the driving force in the narrative that follows.

The change is crucial even if the character comes straight from LeMay: the rugged individualist is also an obsessive, driven man, an exile silently in love with his brother’s wife (Ford cut out all the dialogue that explicated this, but made sure his actors played the subtext in their glancing contact). By marking Ethan as the disruptive influence impinging on the status quo, Ford immediately sets up the vital parallel between the cowboy and Scar, the Comanche chief who abducts Lucy and Debbie Edwards and murders their immediate kin.

Some audiences chafe at this racist hero and ascribe his sentiments to the actor who played him, John Wayne, and to Ford; but of course the film is more complex than that, more self-aware. Glenn Frankel has unearthed some pre-production notes by Pat Ford, the director’s son, that underscore this: “There is much to dislike [about Ethan]... A modern

man would find much about him that is psychopathic. But there is greatness in him too.”

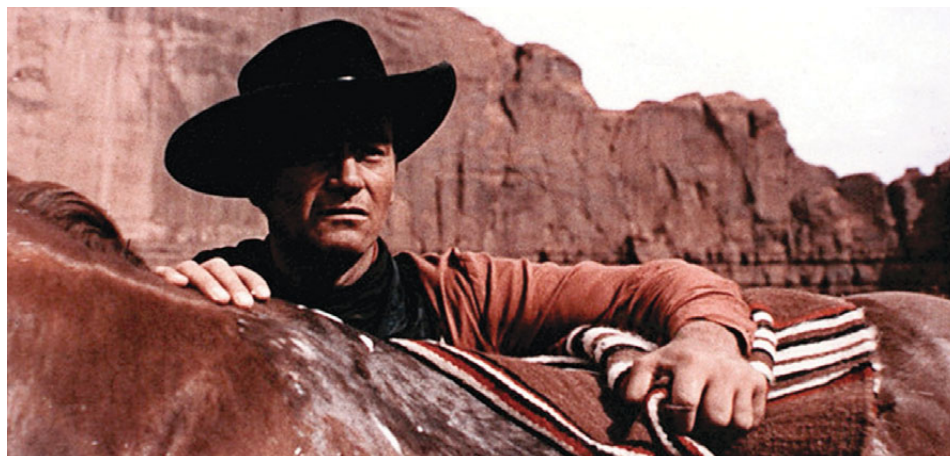
Frankel starts his book with a portrait of the director in decline, his drinking out of control, fighting with Henry Fonda on the set of *Mister Roberts* (1955). Returning to Monument Valley (nowhere near Texas, incidentally) for the fifth time in 17 years would restore his creative instincts, bring him back to himself. Ford is the most compelling and contradictory character here, capable of grace, generosity and artistry but also a bully and a petty tyrant, occasionally noble but more often arrogant and ugly, a lonely man surrounded by sycophants. He would be unforgivable, except for all the beauty he poured into his pictures.

But this is more than a book about Jack Ford. Although he’s sharp on what’s great and what’s weak in the movie, Frankel isn’t a film critic by trade or inclination. He worked 27 years as a reporter for the *Washington Post*; his two previous books are about Israel and South Africa. In *The*

Searchers he finds the same deep-rooted hostility between natives and colonists; the same patterns of racial fear, religious fervour and bloody conflict. He takes us back to the real, tragic story of the abduction of Cynthia Ann Parker and her “rescue” in 1860 – the inspiration for LeMay’s novel – and shows how distorted her tale became through the vainglorious gloss of politicians, reporters and historians, each with his own axe to grind.

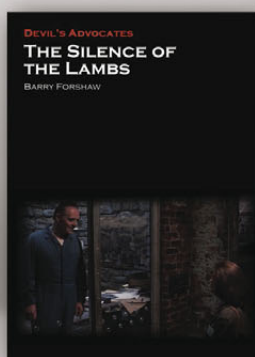
He also dedicates a fascinating chapter to Cynthia Ann’s son by a Comanche chief, Quanah Parker, a warrior who became a symbol for reconciliation. There are perceptive, sympathetic cameos of LeMay and Nugent, Pat Ford and the faintly preposterous money-man, Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, who bankrolled the production he wanted to call ‘The Searchers for Freedom’.

Ultimately, though, this is a book about the power of myth, and how Westerns – maybe *The Searchers* most potently of all – allowed America to reimagine its past and salve its savage soul.



Wayne’s world: as Ethan in *The Searchers*

Read



THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

By Barry Forshaw, Auteur/Devil's Advocates, 102pp, paperback, £9.99, ISBN 9781906733650
The 1991 film based on Thomas Harris's bestseller was a game-changer in the fields of both horror and crime cinema. FBI trainee Clarice Starling was a new kind of heroine – vulnerable, intuitive and in a deeply unhealthy relationship with her monstrous helper/opponent, serial killer Hannibal Lecter. Jonathan Demme's film skilfully appropriated the tropes of police procedural, Gothic melodrama and contemporary horror and produced something entirely new, and that was both critically acclaimed and massively popular. Crime and horror authority Barry Forshaw closely examines the factors that contributed to the film's impact, including the revelatory lead performances.
www.auteur.co.uk



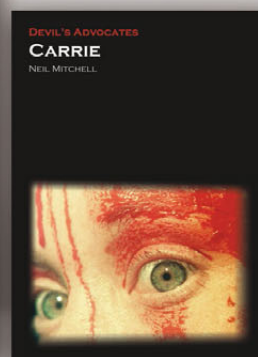
VIVIEN LEIGH

By Kendra Bean, Running Press, 272pp, hardback, illustrated, £20, ISBN 9780762450992
Vivien Leigh's mystique thrived on a combination of beauty, glamour, romance and talent, displayed in her Oscar-winning performances in *Gone With the Wind* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In this book, Kendra Bean chronicles Leigh's life story, from her birth in India, through her winning the most coveted role in Hollywood history, life with Laurence Olivier and battle with bipolar disorder, to her death at the age of 53. Based on previously undisclosed interviews and documents and featuring hundreds of rare photographs, this book closely examines the fascinating, troubled and often misunderstood life of Vivien Leigh – the woman, the actress and the legend.
<http://amzn.to/1aYSKtd>



BRITISH GOTHIC CINEMA

By Barry Forshaw, Palgrave Macmillan, 240pp, hardback £55, ISBN 9781137300300, paperback £16.99, ISBN 9781137300317
Barry Forshaw celebrates the British horror film industry in this definitive study of the genre, from its bloody beginnings in the 1940s through to the 21st century. In *British Gothic Cinema*, the gothic is examined not only in its cinematic and literary forms but also as a guide to the attitudes of the society the genre reflects. The book includes in-depth interviews with filmmakers, directors, writers and actors who reveal the powerful legacy of the genre and demonstrate how influential gothic film classics are for today's filmmakers, including Tim Burton, Ben Wheatley and Edgar Wright.
www.palgrave.com



CARRIE

By Neil Mitchell, Auteur/Devil's Advocates, 110pp, paperback, £9.99, ISBN 9781906733728
Brian De Palma's 1976 adaptation of Stephen King's debut novel is one of the defining films of the 1970s New Hollywood and a horror classic in its own right. Neil Mitchell's *Devil's Advocate* explores the film not just in terms of a formal breakdown – its themes, stylistic tropes, technical approaches and uses of colour, sound, dialogue and visual symbolism – but also the multitude of other factors that have contributed to its classic status, from the origins of the novel to the sequel and remake, as well as the social, political and cultural climate of the era, from second-wave feminism to representations of adolescence.
www.auteur.co.uk



THE THING

By Jez Conolly, Auteur/Devil's Advocates, 112pp, paperback, £9.99, ISBN 9781906733773
Consigned to the deep freeze by its critical and commercial reception on release in 1982, *The Thing* has bounced back to become one of the most highly regarded of all horror films. Thirty years on, Jez Conolly looks back to the film's antecedents and forward to the changing nature of its reception and the work that it has influenced. Themes discussed include the significance of *The Thing's* subversive antipodal environment, the role that the film has played in the corruption of the onscreen monstrous form and the continued relevance of its legendary visual effects despite the advent of CGI. This exploration of the events at US Outpost 31 captures *The Thing's* sub-zero terror in all its gory glory.
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READERS' LETTERS

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BOX FRESH

Congratulations on your TV special (S&S, September). This is uncharted territory and the list of distinguished film directors on TV could be endless. However, allow me to point out some notable omissions: Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Oberwald Mystery* (1982), the four features Ermanno Olmi directed for Italian television: *One Fine Day* (1969), *The Scavengers* (1970), *During the Summer* (1971) and *A Certain Circumstance* (1974), Manoel de Oliveira's *Doomed Love* (1978), Miklós Jancsó's *La tecnica e il rito* (1971), *Rome Wants Another Caesar* (1974) and the series *Faustus*, *Faustus*, *Faustus* (1984), Andrzej Wajda's *Roly-Poly* (1968), *The Birch Wood* (1970) and *Pilate and Others* (1971), Claude Chabrol's two episodes of *Nouvelles de Henry James* (1976) and his five episodes of *Histoires insolites* (1974, 1979), Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water* (1994), Abel Ferrara's two episodes for *Miami Vice* in 1985, 'The Dutch Oven' and 'The Home Invaders', and finally David Lynch's comedy series *On the Air* (1992) and mini-series *Hotel Room* (1992).

Pantelis Karras, Athens

MY FAVOURITE MARSAN

I was delighted to read an appreciation, by David Thomson, of that great British character actor, Eddie Marsan, who is fast becoming a national treasure (S&S, October).

Like Thomson, I was impressed by his performance in *Little Dorrit*. This was the year, 2008, that he had a lead role in Mike Leigh's *Happy-go-lucky*, as the driving instructor saddled with an irritating pupil, Sally Hawkins. Since then I have tried to see new performances and old, and Marsan never disappoints. He was particularly fine as the gay kidnapper in *The Disappearance of Alice Creed*. The last thing I saw him in was the television series *Southcliffe*. Rory Kinnear was glum; Sean Harris was manic; Shirley Henderson was incoherent – all giving one-note performances. Only Eddie Marsan, in just a few scenes, managed to convey the agony but resilience of a bereaved parent.

Keverne Weston, London

CHALLENGING EVILS

As Nick James's editorial implies, films about philosophy can be scarcer than hen's teeth (S&S, October). When *The Name of the Rose* became a movie, Umberto Eco's semiotic musings were jettisoned in favour of a medieval detective story. Ian McEwan suffered likewise with *Enduring Love*: his arguments about the existence of God give way to a battle of wits over a hot air balloon. Too many filmmakers follow Sam Goldwyn's dictum: "If you want to send a message, use Western Union".

It's therefore cause for celebration that *Hannah Arendt*, a film centring on one of the last century's most famous philosophers, successfully manages to distil some of her ideas as well as activities. Before it takes in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, St Augustine,

LETTER OF THE MONTH KEEP IT SNAPPY



Whilst I was pleased to see Vic Pratt's analysis of *The Wicker Man* (S&S, October), and enjoyed his take on the social and cultural background to the film, particularly the idea that the National Petition for Public Decency may have had an influence on its low-profile theatrical release, I must argue against the idea that the so-called 'long' and 'medium' cuts improve upon the 84-minute original theatrical release. This does a great disservice to the work of Eric Boyd-Perkins, whose excellent work as editor removed some of the more 'flabby' parts of this excellent film.

Boyd-Perkins created a snappy, lean thriller from a film that occasionally meandered and lost its way, particularly when Christopher Lee was allowed free rein. He may have removed the folksong 'Gently Johnny', but he created a version of the film that in my opinion is far superior to the director's cut. This may be another example of a film that was improved by keeping the director out of the editing room. I believe it was Mark Kermode who once said (or, probably, quoted): "What does he know...he's only the director." Adam Wardknott, Exeter, UK

the Holocaust, Zionism and a meditation on the nature of evil, there's a somewhat disarming prelude. Arendt, seen in her New York apartment in girlish dialogue with her friend, the novelist Mary McCarthy, is shown as a vibrant, caring human being, not a detached, cerebral automaton. Ideas and emotional engagement aren't mutually exclusive. Filmmakers should take a leaf out of director Margarethe von Trotta's notebook.

Implicit but, alas, never stated in this movie is Arendt's startling idea of 'natality' (explored in *The Human Condition*, 1958). With every birth, there is the possibility of beginning something anew and thereby challenging evils that exist. In refusing the invitation that birth gives us to be a person, it's Eichmann who is the automaton,

not Arendt. And, as such, she is cinematically the more interesting character.
Stephen Brown, by email

Additions and corrections

September p.73 *The Great Hip Hop Hoax*, Cert 18; 92m 21s, 8,311ft +8 frames
October p.60 *Blue Jasmine*, Cert 12A, 98m 23s, 8,854ft +8 frames; p.68 *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*, Cert 15, 96m 30s, 8,685ft +0 frames; p.62 *Kelly + Victor*, aspect ratio 1.85:1; p.70 *The Artist and the Model*, Cert 12A, 105m 10s, 9,465ft +0 frames; p.71 *Borrowed Time*, Cert 15, 87m 36s, 7,884ft +0 frames; p.72 *Emperor*, Cert 12A, 105m 20s, 9,480ft +0 frames; p.74 *For Those in Peril*, aspect ratio: 1.85:1; p.75 *The Great Beauty*, aspect ratio: 2.35:1; p.76 *Hannah Arendt*, Cert 12A, 111m 27s, 10,210ft +8 frames; p.77 *Harrigan*, aspect ratio: 2.35:1; p.78 *How I Live Now*, aspect ratio: 1.85:1; p.79 *In a World...* © In a World, LLC. Sound Mixer: Matthew Nicolay. Cameron Diaz appears uncredited. Aspect ratio: 2.35:1; p.80 *In the Name of*, Cert 15, 101m 48s, 9,162ft +0 frames; p.80 *InRealLife*, Cert 15, 89m 1s, 8,011ft +8 frames, aspect ratio is 1.78:1; p.84 *Metro Manila*, Cert 15, 114m 43s, 10,324ft +8 frames; p.87 *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, aspect ratio 1.78:1; p.89 *Thanks for Sharing*, aspect ratio 2.35:1; p.90 *The To Do List*, aspect ratio 1.85:1

MAGNOLIA



A kaleidoscopic, Altmanesque, biblical epic – Paul Thomas Anderson then finishes it on a note of quiet affection

By Philip Concannon

In *That Moment*, the behind-the-scenes video diary that accompanied *Magnolia* on DVD and blu-ray, Paul Thomas Anderson and his then-girlfriend Fiona Apple can be seen performing a skit that satirises disappointed critical and public reactions to the film. As Apple dances frantically around the room 'being' the film, the director angrily critiques her performance with lines like "There are too many characters...too many blow-ups...it's just too – fucking – *too!*" When she has finally finished her routine he says to her, "What kind of ending was that? Let me tell you something. People don't care about her smiling."

The smile Anderson is referring to belongs to Melora Walters, and it comes right at the end of his exhilarating and exhausting film. *Magnolia* (1999) is a big movie. For over three hours the young writer/director displays the full range of his filmmaking skills, boldly inviting comparisons to his idol Robert Altman as he weaves a multi-character melodrama across 24 hours in the San Fernando Valley. There's hardly a scene in the film that isn't marked by some dazzling display of directorial craft, a startling revelation, or an actor being put through the emotional wringer, and when Anderson has driven everything to fevered intensity he has the chutzpah to invoke a *deus ex machina* on a biblical scale.

But while Anderson's exuberant filmmaking flair is eye-catching throughout, perhaps the

truest sign of his skill as a storyteller is the way he chooses to bring his film to a close. *Magnolia* has a dozen main characters vying for our attention, but the beating heart of the film is in the relationship between Officer Jim Kurring (John C. Reilly) and Claudia Wilson Gator (Walters). They certainly make an unlikely couple: Jim is a scrupulously by-the-book police officer whose life is defined by a steady routine and clean morals, while Claudia is a fragile young woman damaged by a lifetime of abuse, who takes solace in drugs and meaningless sex, her self-worth having long since ebbed away. We see their relationship begin with an amusing "meet cute" and then watch them navigate their way through a scene of endearingly awkward small talk and flirtation, before they share a passionate kiss over dinner that Anderson's camera lunges forward to capture, as if propelled by their sudden and uncharacteristically decisive act. But no sooner have they pulled out of the clinch than Claudia's propensity for self-sabotage, and her fear of embracing the possibility of happiness, leads her to cut the date short.

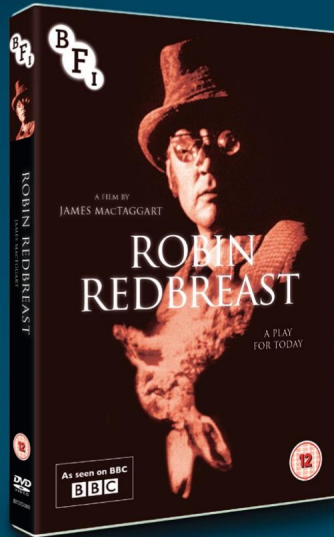
While many of the central figures in *Magnolia* are characterised by selfishness, bitterness, cruelty or an inability to recognise their own flaws until it's too late, Jim and Claudia are essentially good people, and it's no surprise that Anderson's humane instincts lead him to give these lost souls a second chance. In the film's

'What kind of ending was that? Let me tell you something. People don't care about her smiling'

final scene, we see a tearful Claudia sitting on her bed, arms defensively crossed, as Jim arrives to make one final plea. Anderson lets us hear parts of Jim's heartfelt speech ("You're a good person. You're a good and beautiful person... I won't let you walk out on me."), but most of it is drowned out by Aimee Mann's 'Save Me', indicating that the key to the scene is not Jim's words but Claudia's reaction to them. As the camera creeps slowly forward, the look on her face suggests that she is genuinely taking his words to heart, and that her barriers are gradually coming down. As Jim reaches the end of his speech, and the camera moves in for a close-up, she momentarily casts her eyes downwards, and then she looks up directly at the camera, and smiles.

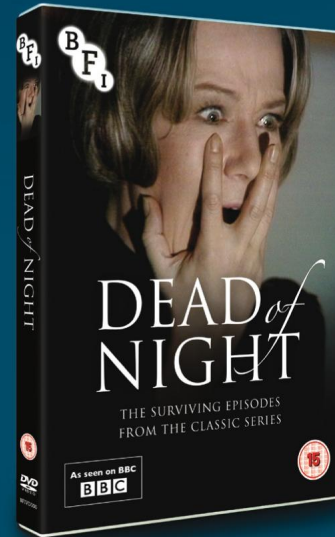
Anderson's filmmaking has developed in a number of interesting and exciting ways in the years since *Magnolia*, but *There Will be Blood* and *The Master* are more emotionally oblique and evasive, and I miss the unabashed emotional openness that he exhibits in this film. *Magnolia* is largely a film about regrets and the characters spend much of their time lamenting their past misdeeds (notably in Jason Robards' "Goddamn regret" deathbed monologue), but as in *Boogie Nights*, Anderson ends on a note of conciliation and optimism for those who merit it. The final scene between Jim and Claudia might be played in a minor key, but it represents a moment of genuine connection between these two characters and – thanks to Claudia's breaking of the fourth wall – with the audience, and the impact of this tiny gesture is all the greater for coming at the end of a bombastic film. Claudia's smile tells us that she might just be OK, and provides us with one of the most surprising and emotionally satisfying endings in cinema. 🍷

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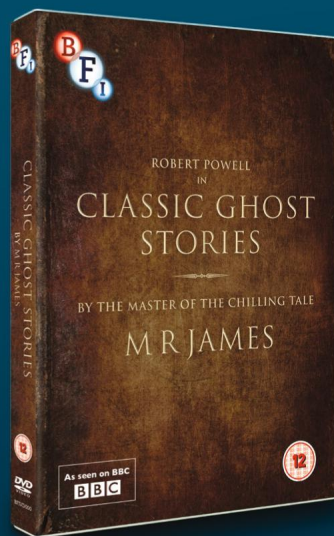
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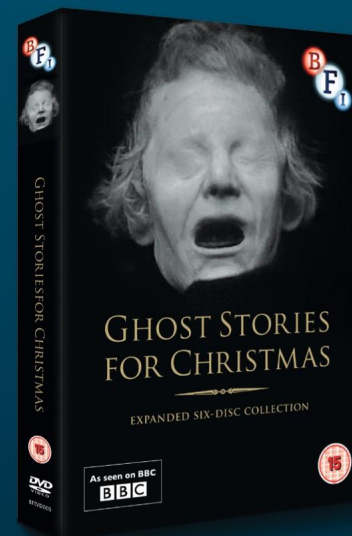
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